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THEY*

BY RUDYARD KIPLING

ONE view called me to another—one hill top to its fellow—half across the county; and since I could answer at no more trouble than the snapping forward of a lever, I let the county flow under my wheels. The orchid-studded flats of the East gave way to the thyme, ilex, and grey grass of the Downs; these, again, to the rich cornland and fig trees of the lower coast, where you carry the beat of the tide on your left hand for fifteen level miles: and when, at last, I turned inland, through a huddle of rounded hills and woods, I had run myself clean out of my known marks. Beyond that precise hamlet which stands Godmother to the capital of the United States, I found hidden villages where bees, the only things awake, boomed in eighty-foot lindens that overhung grey Norman churches; miraculous brooks diving under stone bridges built for heavier traffic than would ever vex them again; tithe-barns larger than their churches, and an old smithy that cried out aloud how it had once been a hall of the Knights of the Temple. Gipsies I found on a common where the gorse, bracken, and heath fought it out together up a mile of Roman road; and a little further on I disturbed a red fox rolling dog-fashion in the naked sunlight.

But, as the wooded hills closed about me, I stood up in the car to take the bearings of that great down whose ringed head is a landmark for fifty miles across the low countries. I judged that the dip of the country would bring me across some westward-running road that went to his feet; but I did not allow for the confusing veils of the woods. A quick turn plunged me first into a green cutting brimful of liquid sunshine, and next into a gloomy tunnel where last year's leaves whispered and scuffled about my tyres. The strong hazel stuff meeting overhead had not been cut for a couple of generations at least, nor had any axe helped the moss-cankered oak and beech to grow above them. Here the road changed frankly into a carpeted ride, on whose brown velvet spent primrose clumps showed like jade, and a few sickly white-stalked bluebells nodded together. As the slope favoured I shut off the power and slid on over the whirled leaves, expecting every moment to meet a keeper; but I only heard a jay arguing against the silence under the twilight of the trees.

Still the track descended. I was on the point of reversing and working my way back on the second speed ere I ended in some swamp, when I saw sunshine through the tangle ahead and lifted the brake.

It was down again at once. As the light beat across my face my fore wheels took the turf of a great lawn from which sprung horsemen ten feet high with levelled lances, monstrous peacocks and sleek round-headed maids of honour—blue black and

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glistening—all of clipped yew. Across the lawn—the steep woods besieged it on three sides—stood an ancient house of lichened and weather-worn stone, with mullioned windows and roofs of rose-red tile. It was flanked by semi-circular walls, also rose-red, that embraced the lawn on the fourth side, and at their feet a box hedge grew man-high. There were doves on the roof about the slim brick chimneys, and I caught a glimpse of an octagonal dove-house behind the screening wall.

Here, then, I stayed; the horseman's green spear laid at my breast, held by the exceeding beauty of that jewel in that setting.

"If I am not packed off for a trespasser or if this knight does not ride a wallop at me," thought I, "Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth at least will come out of that half-open garden door and ask me to tea."

A child appeared at an upper window and I thought the little thing waved a friendly hand. But it was to call a companion, for presently another bright head showed. Then I heard a laugh among the yew-peacocks, and turning to make sure (till then I had been watching the house only) saw the silver of a fountain behind a hedge thrown up against the sun. The doves on the roof cooed to the cooing water, but between the two notes I caught the utterly happy chuckle of a child absorbed in some light mischief.

The garden door—of heavy oak sunk deep in the thickness of the wall—opened. A woman in a big garden-hat set her foot slowly on the hollowed stone step and as slowly walked across the turf. I was forming some sort of apology when she lifted up her head and I saw that she was blind.

"I heard you," she said. "Isn't that a motor car?"

"I'm afraid I've made a mistake in my road. I should have turned off up above—I never dreamed——" I began.

"But I'm very glad. Fancy a motor car coming quite into the garden! It will be such a treat——" She turned and made as though looking about her. "You—you haven't seen anyone, have you—perhaps?"

"No one to speak to, but the children seemed interested at a distance."

"Which?"

"I saw a couple up at the window just now and I think I heard a little chap in the grounds."

"Oh, lucky you!" she cried, and her face brightened. "I hear them, of course, but that's all. You've seen them, and heard them too?"

"Yes," I answered. "And if I know anything of children one of them's having a beautiful time by the fountain yonder. Escaped, I should imagine."

"You're fond of children?"

I gave her one or two reasons why I did not altogether hate them.

"Of course, of course," she said. "Then you understand. Then you won't think it foolish if I ask you to take your car through the gardens once or twice—quite slowly. I'm sure they'd like to see it. They see so little, poor things! One tries to make their life pleasant—but——" she threw out her hands towards the marshalled woods. "We're so out of the world here."

"That will be splendid," I said. "But I shall cut up your turf."

She faced to the right. "Wait a minute," she said. "We're at the South gate, aren't we? Behind those peacocks there's a flagged path. We call it the Peacocks' Walk. You can't see it from here, they tell me, but if you squeeze along by the edge of the wood you can turn at the first peacock and get on to the flags."

It was sacrilege to wake that dreaming housefront with the clatter of machinery, but I swung the car to clear the turf, brushed along the edge of the wood, and turned it in on the broad stone path where the fountain-basin lay like one star sapphire.

"May I come too?" she cried. "No, please don't help me. They'll like it better if they see me."

She felt her way lightly to the front of the car, and with one foot on the step called: "Children, oh, children! Look and see what's going to happen!"

The voice would have drawn lost souls from the Pit, for the yearning that underlay its sweetness, and I was not surprised to hear an answering shout behind the yews. It must have been the child by the fountain, but he fled at our approach, leaving a toy boat in the water. I saw the glint of his blue blouse among the still horsemen.

Very disposedly we paraded the length of the walk, and at her request backed again. This time the child had got the better of his panic, but stood, far off, and doubting.

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"The little fellow's watching us," I said. "I wonder if he'd like a ride?"

"They're very shy still. Very shy. But oh, lucky you to be able to see them! Let's listen."

I stopped the machine at once, and the humid stillness, heavy with the scent of box, cloaked us deep. Shears I could hear where some gardener was clipping; a mumble of bees and broken voices that might have been the doves.

"Ah, unkind!" she said wearedly.

"Perhaps they're only shy of the motor. The little maid at the window looks tremendously interested."

"Yes?" She raised her head. "It was wrong of me to say that. They really are fond of me. It's the only thing that makes life worth living—when they're fond of you, isn't it? I daren't think what the place would be without them. By the way, is it beautiful?"

"I think it is the most beautiful place I have ever seen."

"So they all tell me. I can feel it, of course, but that isn't quite the same thing."

"Then have you never——?" I began, but stopped abashed.

"Not since I can remember. It happened when I was only a few months old, they tell me. And yet I must remember something. Else how could I dream about the colours? I see light in my dreams, but I never see *them*. I only hear them—just as I do when I'm awake."

"It's difficult to see faces in dreams. Some people can, but most of us haven't the gift," I went on idly, looking at the window where the child stood all but hidden.

"I've heard that too," she said. "And they tell me that one never sees a dead person's face in a dream. Is that true?"

"I believe it is—now I come to think of it."

"But how is it with yourself—yourself?" The blind eyes turned cruelly towards me.

"I have never seen the face of my dead in any dream," I answered.

"Then it must be as bad as being blind."

The sun had dipped behind the woods and the long shade was possessing the insolent horsemen one by one. I saw the light die off from the top of a glossy-leaved lance and all that brave, hard green turn to soft black. The house, accepting another day at end, as it had accepted an hundred thousand gone, seemed to settle deeper into its rest among the shadows.

"Have you ever wanted to?" she said, after the silence.

"Very much sometimes," I replied. The children had left the window and the shadow lay upon it.

"Ah, so 've I: but I don't suppose it's allowed. . . . Where d' you live?"

"Quite the other side of the county—fifty miles and more, and I must be going back. I've come without my big lamp."

"But it's not dark yet. I can feel it."

"I'm afraid it will be by the time I get home. Could you lend me someone to set me on my road at first? I've utterly lost myself."

"I'll send Madden with you to the cross-roads. We *are* so out of the world, I don't wonder you were lost. I'll take you round to the front of the house; but you will go slowly, won't you, till you're out of the grounds?"

"I promise you I'll go like this," I said, and let the car start herself down the flagged path.

We skirted the left wing of the house, whose elaborately castlead guttering alone was worth a day's journey to see; passed under a great rose-grown gate in the red wall, and so round to the high front of the house, which in beauty and stateliness as much excelled the back as that all others of its age I had ever visited.

"Is it so very beautiful?" she said wistfully, when she heard my raptures. "And you see the lead statues too? There's the old azalea garden behind. They say that this place must have been made for children. Will you help me out, please? I should like to come with you as far as the cross-roads, but I mustn't leave them. Is that you, Madden? I want you to show this gentleman the way to the cross-roads. He has lost his way, but—he has seen them."

A butler appeared noiselessly at the miracle of old oak that must be called the front door, and slipped aside to put on his hat. She stood looking at me with open blue eyes in which no sight lay, and I saw for the first time that she was beautiful.

"Remember," she said quietly. "If you are fond of them you will come again," and disappeared within the house.

The butler in the car said nothing till we were nearly at the lodge gates, where, catch-

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ing a glimpse of a blue blouse in a shrubbery, I swerved amply lest the devil that leads little boys to play should drag me into murder.

"Excuse me," he asked of a sudden, "but why did you do that, Sir?"

"The child yonder."

"The young gentleman in blue?"

"Of course."

"He runs about a good deal. Did you see him by the fountain, Sir?"

"Oh, yes, several times. Do we turn left here?"

"Yes, Sir. And did you 'appen to see them upstairs too?"

"At the upper window? Yes."

"Was that before the mistress come out to speak to you, Sir?"

"A little before that. Why d' you want to know?"

He paused a little. "Only to make sure that—that they 'ad seen the car, Sir, because with children running about, though I'm sure you're driving particularly careful, there might be an accident. That was all, Sir. Here are the cross roads. You can't miss your way from now on. Thank you, Sir, but that isn't our custom, not with——"

"I beg your pardon," I said, and thrust away the British silver.

"Oh, it's quite right with the rest of 'em, as a rule. Your road, Sir."

He retired into the armour-plated conning tower of his castle and walked away. Evidently a butler solicitous for the honour of the house, and interested, probably through a maid, in the nursery.

Once beyond the signposts at the cross-roads I looked back, but the wooded hills interlaced so jealously that I could not see where the house had lain. When I asked its name at a cottage along the road the fat woman who sold sweetmeats there gave me broadly to understand that people with motor cars had small right to live—much less to "go about talking like carriage-folk." They were not a pleasant-mannered community.

When I retraced my route on the map that evening I was little wiser. Hawkin's Old Farm appeared to be the Survey title of the place, and the old County gazetteer, generally so ample, did not allude to it. The big house of these parts was Hondington End, Georgian with early Victorian embellishments, as an atrocious steel-engraving attested. I carried my difficulty to a neighbour—a deep-rooted tree of our soil—and he gave me a name of a family which conveyed no meaning.

A month or so later—I went again, or it may have been that my car took the road of her own volition. She overran the fruitless Downs, threaded every turn of the maze of lanes below the hills, drew through the high-walled woods, impenetrable in their full leaf, came out at the cross-roads where the butler had left me, and a little farther on developed an internal trouble which forced me to turn her in on a grass way-waste that cut into a summer-silent hazel wood. So far as I could make sure by the sun and a six-inch ordnance map, this should be the road flank of that wood which I had first explored from the heights above. I made a mighty serious business of my repairs and a glittering shop of my repair-kit, spanners, pump and the like, which I spread out orderly upon a rug. It was a trap to catch all childhood, for on such a day I argued the children would not be far off. When I paused in my work I listened, but the wood was so full of the noises of summer (though the birds had mated) that I could not at first distinguish these from the tread of small cautious feet stealing across the dead leaves. I rang my bell in an alluring manner, but the feet fled and I repented; for to a child a sudden noise can be a very real terror. I must have been at work half an hour when I heard in the wood the voice of the blind woman crying: "Children! Oh, children, where are you?" and the stillness made slow to close on the perfection of that cry. She came towards me, half feeling her way between the tree-boles, and though a child it seemed clung to her skirt, it ran into the leafage like a rabbit as she drew nearer.

"Is that you?" she said. "From the other side of the county?"

"Yes. It's me—from the other side of the county."

"Then why didn't you come through the upper woods? They were there just now. Expecting you?"

"They were here a few minutes ago. I fancy they knew my car had broken down, and came to see the fun."

"Nothing serious, I hope? How do cars break down?"

"In fifty different ways. Only, mine has chosen the fifty-first."

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She laughed at the tiny joke—cooed with delicious laughter and pushed her hat back.

"Let me hear," said she.

"Wait a moment," I cried, "and I'll get you a cushion."

She set her foot on the rug all covered with spare parts and stooped above it eagerly. "What delightful things!" The ringless hands through which she saw glanced in the chequered sunlight. "A box here—another box! Why, you've arranged them like playing shop!"

"I confess now that I put it out to attract them. I don't need half those things really."

"How nice of you! I heard your bell in the upper wood. You say they were here before that?"

"I'm sure of it. Why are they so shy? That little fellow in blue who was with you just now ought to have got over his fright. He's been watching me like a Red Indian."

"It must have been your bell," she said. "I heard one of them go past me in trouble when I was coming down. They're shy—so shy, even with me." She turned her face over her shoulder and cried again: "Children! Oh, children! Look and see!"

"They must have gone off together on their own affairs," I suggested, for there was a murmur in the wood of lowered voices broken by the sudden squeaking giggles of childhood. I returned to my tinkerings and she leaned forward, her chin on her hand, litsening interestedly.

"How many are they?" I said at last. The work was finished, but I saw no reason to go.

Her forehead puckered a little in thought. "I don't quite know," she said simply. "Sometimes more—sometimes less. They come and stay with me because I love them, you see."

"That must be very jolly," I said, replacing a drawer; and as I spoke heard the inanity of my answer.

"You—you aren't laughing at me?" she cried. "I—I haven't any of my own. I never married. People laugh at me sometimes about them because—because——"

"Because they're savages," I returned. "It's nothing to fret for. That sort laugh at everything that isn't in their own fat lives."

"I don't know. How should I? I only don't like being laughed at about them. It hurts: and when one can't see . . . I don't want to seem silly"—her chin quivered like a child's as she spoke—"but we blindies have only one skin, I think. Everything outside hits straight at our souls. It's different with you. You've such good defences in your eyes—looking out—before anyone can really pain you in your soul. People forget that with us."

I was silent, reviewing that inexhaustible matter, the more than inherited (since it is also carefully taught) brutality of the Christian peoples, beside which the mere heathendom of the West Coast nigger is cleanly restraint. It led me a long distance into myself.

"Don't do that," she said of a sudden, putting her hands before her eyes.

"What?"

She made a gesture with her hand.

"That! It's—it's all purple and black. Don't! Those colours hurt."

"But how in the world do you know about colours," I exclaimed, for here was a revelation indeed.

"Colours as colours?" she asked.

"No, those colours which you saw just now."

"You know as well as I do," she laughed, "else you wouldn't have asked that question. They aren't in the world at all. They're in *you*—when you went so angry."

"D' you mean a dull purplish patch, like port wine mixed with ink?" I said.

"I've never seen ink or port wine, but the colours aren't mixed. They are separate—all broken."

"Do you mean black streaks and jags across the purple?"

She nodded. "Yes—like this," and zigzagged her finger again; "but it's more what is called red than purple—that bad colour—to me."

"And what are the colours at the top of the—the picture as you see it?"

Slowly she leaned forward and traced on the rug the figure of the Egg Itself.

"I see them *so*," she said, pointing with a grass stem. "White, green, yellow, red, purple, and when people are angry or bad, black across the red—as you were just now."

"Who told you anything about it—in the beginning?" I demanded.

"About those Colours? No one. I used to ask what colours were called when I was

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little—in table covers and curtains and carpets, you see—because some colours hurt me and some made me happy. People told me; and when I got older that was how I saw people." Again she traced the outline of that Egg which it is given to very few of us to see.

"All by yourself?" I repeated.

"All by myself. There wasn't anyone else. I only found out afterwards that other people did not see them."

She leaned against the tree-bole plaiting and unplaiting chance-plucked grass stems. The children in the wood had drawn nearer. I could see them with the tail of my eye, frolicking like shadows among the swaying shadows.

"Now I am sure you will never laugh at me," she went on after a long silence. "Nor at them."

"Good Heavens!" I cried, jolted out of my train of thought. "A man who laughs at a child—unless the child is laughing too—is a heathen!"

"I didn't mean that, of course. You'd never laugh *at* children, but I thought—I used to think—that perhaps you might laugh about *them*. So now I beg your pardon. . . . What are you going to laugh at?"

I had made no sound, but she knew.

"At the notion of your begging my pardon. If you had done your duty as a pillar of the state and a landed proprietress you ought to have summoned me for trespass when I barged through your woods the other day. It was disgraceful of me—inexcusable."

She looked at me, her head against the tree trunk—long and steadfastly this blind woman who could see the naked soul.

"How curious," she half whispered. "How very curious."

"Why, what have I done?"

"You don't understand . . . and yet you understood about the Colours. *Don't* you understand?"

She spoke with a passion that nothing had justified, and I faced her bewilderedly as she rose. The children had gathered themselves in a roundel behind a bramble bush. One sleek head bent over something smaller, and the set of the shoulders told me that fingers were on lips. They, too, possessed some wonderful child's secret. I alone was astray there in the broad summer light.

"No," I said, and shook my head as though the dead eyes could note. "Whatever it is, I don't understand yet. Perhaps I shall later—if you'll let me come again."

"You will come again," she answered. "You will surely come again, and walk in the wood."

"Perhaps the children will know me well enough by that time to let me play with them — as a favour. You know what children are like."

"It isn't a matter of favour, but of right," she replied, and while I wondered what she meant, a dishevelled woman plunged round the bend of the road, loose-haired, purple, almost lowing with agony as she ran. It was my rude fat friend of the sweetmeat shop. The blind woman heard and stepped forward.

"What is it, Mrs. Madehurst?" she asked.

The woman flung her apron over her head, and literally grovelled in the dust, crying that her grandchild was sick to death, that the local doctor was away fishing, that Jenny the mother was at her wits' end, and so forth, with repetitions and bellowings.

"Where's the next nearest doctor?" I asked, between the paroxysms.

"Madden will tell you. Go round to the house and take him with you. I'll attend to this. Be quick!" She half supported the fat woman into the shade. In two minutes I was blowing all the horns of Jericho under the front of the House Beautiful, and Madden, in the pantry, rose to the crisis like a butler and a man.

A quarter of an hour at illegal speeds caught us a doctor five miles away. Within the half hour we had decanted him, much interested in motors, at the door of the sweetmeat-shop, and drew up the road to await the verdict.

"Useful things, cars," said Madden, all man and no butler. "If I'd had one when my first took sick she wouldn't have died."

"How was it?" I asked.

"Croup. Mrs. Madden was away. No one knew what to do. I drove eight miles in a tax-cart for the doctor. She was clean choked when we came back. This car 'ud ha' saved her. She'd have been close on ten now."

"I'm sorry," I said. "I thought you were rather fond of children from what you told me going to the cross-roads the other day."

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"Have you seen 'em, Sir—this mornin'?"

"Yes, but they're well broke to car. I couldn't get any of them within twenty yards of mine."

He looked at me carefully as a scout considers a stranger—not as a menial should lift his eyes to his divinely appointed superior.

"I wonder why," he said, just above the breath that he drew.

We waited on. A light wind from the sea wandered up and down the long lines of the woods, and the wayside grasses, whitened already with summer dust, rose and bowed in sallow waves.

A woman came out of the cottage next the sweetmeat shop wiping the suds off her arms.

"I've been listenin' in de back yard," she said cheerily. "He says Arthur's unaccountable bad. Did ye hear him shruck just now? Unaccountable bad. I reckon t'will come Jenny's turn to walk in de wood nex' week along, Mr. Madden."

"Excuse me, Sir, but your lap-robe is slipping," said Madden, deferentially. The woman started, dropped a courtsey, and hurried away.

"What does she mean by 'walking in the wood?'" I asked.

"It must be some saying they use hereabouts. I'm Norfolk myself," said Madden. "They're an independent lot in this county. She took you for a chauffeur, Sir."

I saw the doctor come out of the cottage followed by a draggle-tailed wench, who clung to his arm as though he could make treaty for her with Death.

"That sort," she wailed—"dey're just as much to us dat has 'em as if dey was lawful born. Just as much—just as much! An' God He'd be just as pleased if you saved 'un, Doctor. Don't take it from me! Miss Florence will tell 'ee de very same. Don't leave 'im, Doctor!" . . .

"I know—I know," said the man; "but he'll be quiet for a while now. We'll send the nurse and the medicine as fast as we can."

He signalled me to come forward with the car, and I strove not to be privy to what followed, but I saw the girl's face, blotched and frozen with grief, and I felt her hand clutching at my knees when we moved away.

The doctor was a man of some humour, for I remember he claimed my car under the Oath of Æsculapius, and used it and me without mercy. First we convoyed Mrs. Madehurst and the blind woman to wait by the sick-bed till the nurse should come. Next we invaded a neat country town for prescriptions (the Doctor said the trouble was cerebro-spinal meningitis) and when the County Institute, banked and flanked with a market day's scared cattle, reported itself out of nurses for the moment, we literally flung loose upon the county. We conferred with the owners of great houses—magnates at the ends of overarching avenues, whose big-boned women-folk strode away from their tea-tables to listen to the imperious doctor.

At last, a white-haired lady sitting under a cedar of Lebanon, and surrounded by a court of magnificent Borzois—all hostile to motors—gave the doctor, who received them as from a princess, written orders which we bore many miles at top speed, through a park, to a French nunnery, where we took over in exchange a pallid-faced and trembling Sister. She knelt in the bottom of the tonneau telling her beads without pause till, by short cuts of the doctor's invention, we had her to the sweetmeat-shop once more.

It was a long afternoon, crowded with mad episodes that rose and dissolved like the dust of our wheels; cross sections of remote and incomprehensible lives through which we raced at right angles: and I went home in the dusk, wearied out, to dream of the clashing horns of cattle, round-eyed nuns walking in a garden of graves, pleasant tea-parties beneath shaded trees, the carbolic-scented grey painted corridors of the County Institute, the steps of children in the wood, and the hand that clawed my knee when the motor began to move.

. . . . . .

I had intended to return in a day or two, but it pleased Fate to hold me away from that side of the county, on many pretexts, till the elder and the wild rose had fruited. There came at last a brilliant day, swept clear from the southwest, that brought the hills within hand's reach—a day of unstable airs and high filmy clouds. Through no merit of my own I was free, and set the car for the third time on that known road. As I reached the crest of the Downs I felt the soft air change; saw it glaze under the sun, and looking down at the sea, in that

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instant, beheld the blue of the Channel turn through polished silver and dulled steel to dingy pewter. A laden collier hugging the coast steered outward for deeper water, and through copper-coloured haze sails rose one by one on the anchored fishing fleet. In a deep dene behind me an eddy of sudden wind drummed through sheltered oaks, and spun aloft the first dry sample of autumn leaves. When I reached the beach road the sea-fog fumed over the brick-fields, and the tide was telling all the groins of the swell beyond Ushant. In less than an hour, summer England vanished in blank grey. We were again the shut island of the North, all the ships of the world bellowing at our perilous gates; and between their outcries ran the piping of bewildered gulls. My cap dripped moisture, the folds of the rug held it in pools, or sluiced it away in runnels, and the salt rime stuck to my lips.

Inland, the smell of autumn loaded the thickened fog among the trees, and the drip became a continuous shower. Yet the late flowers—mallow of the wayside, scabious of the field, and dahlia of the garden—showed gay in the mist, and beyond the sea's breath there was little sign of decay in the leaf. Yet in the villages the house doors were all open, and bare-legged, bare-headed children sat at ease on the damp doorsteps to shout "pip-pip" at the stranger.

I made bold to call at the sweetmeat shop, where Mrs. Madehurst met me with a fat woman's tears. Jenny's child, she said, had died two days after the nun had come. It was, she felt, best out of the way, even though insurance offices, for reasons which she did not pretend to follow, would not willingly insure such stray lives. "Not but what Jenny didn't tend to Arthur as though he'd come all proper at de end of de first year—like Jenny herself." Thanks to Miss Florence, the child had been buried with a pomp that, in Mrs. Madehurst's opinion, more than covered the small irregularity of its birth. She described the coffin, within and without, the glass hearse, and the lining of the grave.

"But how's the mother?" I asked.

"Jenny? Oh, she'll get over it. I've felt dat way with one or two o' my own. She'll get over. She's walkin' in de wood now."

"In this weather?"

Mrs. Madehurst looked at me with narrowed eyes, across the counter.

"I dunno but it opens de 'eart. Yes, it opens de 'eart. Dat's where losin' and bearin' come so alike in de long run, we do say."

Now the wisdom of old wives is greater than of all the fathers, and this last oracle set me thinking so extendedly as I went up the road that I nearly ran over a woman and a child at the wooded corner by the lodge gates of the House Beautiful.

"Awful weather!" I cried, as I slowed dead for the turn.

"Not so bad," she answered placidly out of the fog. "Mine's used to 'en. You'll find yours indoors, I reckon."

Indoors Madden received me with professional courtesy and kind enquiries for the health of the motor, which he would put under cover.

I waited in a still nutbrown hall made pleasant with late flowers, and warmed by a delicious wood-fire—a place of good influence and great peace. A child's cart and a doll lay on the black and white floor where a rug had been kicked back. I felt that the children had only just hurried away—to hide themselves most like—in the many turns of the great adzed staircase that climbed statelily out of the hall, or to crouch at gaze behind the lions and roses of the carven gallery that ran round three sides of it above. Then I heard her voice singing as the blind sing—from the soul.

"In the pleasant orchard-closes" (and all my early summer came back at the call)

> In the pleasant orchard-closes
> God bless all our gains, say we—
> But may God bless all our losses
> Better suits with our degree!

She dropped the marring fifth line and repeated

> Better suits with our degree!

I saw her lean over the gallery, her linked hands white as pearl against the oak.

"Is that you—from the other side of the county?"

"Yes, me—from the other side of the county," I answered laughing.

"What a long time before you had to come here again." She ran down the stairs, one hand lightly touching the broad rail. "It's two months and four days. Summer's gone!"

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"I meant to come before, but Fate prevented."

"I knew it. . . . Please do something to that fire. They won't let me play with it, but I can feel it's behaving badly. Hit it!"

I looked on either side of the deep fireplace, and found but a half-charred hedge-stake with which I punched a black log into flame.

"It never goes out, day or night," she said, as though explaining. "In case anyone comes in with cold toes, you see."

"It's even lovelier inside than it was out," I murmured. The red light poured itself along the age-polished dusky panels till the Tudor roses and lions of the gallery took on colour and motion. An old eagle-topped convex mirror gathered the picture into its mysterious heart, distorting afresh the distorted shadows, and curving the gallery lines into the curves of a ship. The day was shutting down in half a gale as the fog turned to stringy scud; through the uncurtained mullions of the broad window I could see the valiant horsemen on the lawn curvet and caracole against the wind that pelted them with dead leaves.

"Yes, it must be beautiful," she said. "Would you like to go over it? There's still light enough upstairs."

I followed her up the unflinching waggon-wide staircase to the gallery whence opened the thin fluted Elizabethan doors.

"Feel how they put the latches low down for the sake of the children." She swung a light door inward on its long hinge.

"By the way, where are they?" I asked. "I haven't even heard them."

She did not answer at once. Then, "I can only hear them," she replied softly. "This is one of their rooms. Everything ready, you see."

She pointed into a heavily-timbered room. There were little low gate-tables and children's chairs. A doll's house, its hooked front half open, faced a great dappled rocking horse from whose padded saddle it was but a child's scramble to the broad window-seat overlooking the lawn. A toy gun lay in a corner with a gilt wooden cannon.

"Surely they've only just gone!" I whispered. In the failing light a door creaked cautiously. I caught the rustle of a frock and the patter of feet—quick feet through a room beyond.

"I heard that," she cried triumphantly. "Did you? Children, O children, where are you?"

The voice filled the walls that held it lovingly to the last perfect note, but there came no answering shout such as I had heard in the garden. We passed on from room to oak-floored room; up a step here, down three steps there, among a maze of passages—always mocked by our quarry. One might as well have tried to work an unstopped warren with a single ferret. There were bolt-holes innumerable—recesses in the walls, embrasures of deep slitten windows now darkened, whence they could start up behind us; and abandoned fireplaces six feet deep in the masonry as well as the tangle of communicating doors. Above all they had the twilight for their helper in our game. I had heard one or two joyous chuckles of evasion, and once or twice had seen the silhouette of a child's frock against some darkening window at the end of a passage; but we returned empty handed to the gallery just as a middle-aged woman was setting a lamp in its niche.

"No, I haven't seen Evie neither this evening, Miss Florence," I heard her say, "but that Turpin he says he wants to see you."

"Oh! Mr. Turpin must want to see me very badly. Tell him to come to the hall, Mrs. Madden."

I looked down into the hall whose only light was the dulled fire, and deep in the shadow I saw them at last. They must have slipped down while we were in the passages, and now thought themselves perfectly hidden behind an old gilt leather screen. By child's law my fruitless chase was as good as an introduction, but since I had taken so much trouble I resolved to force them to come forward later by the simple trick, which children detest, of pretending to take no notice. They lay close, in a little huddle, no more than shadows, except when some quick flame betrayed an outline.

"And now we'll have some tea," she said. "I believe I ought to have offered it you at first; but one doesn't arrive at manners, somehow, when one lives alone and is considered—h'm—peculiar." Then with very pretty scorn: "Would you like a lamp to see to eat by?"

"The firelight's much pleasanter, I

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think." We descended into that delightful gloom, and Madden brought tea.

I took my chair in the direction of the screen, ready to surprise or be surprised, and at her permission, since the hearth is always sacred, bent forward to play with the fire.

"Where do you get these beautiful short faggots from?" I asked. "They're cut up like laths."

"Those are old tallies," she said. "As I can't read or write, I'm driven back on the early English tally for my accounts. Give me one and I'll tell you what it means."

I passed her a squared hazel-stick, about a foot long, and she ran her thumb cunningly down the nicks.

"This is the milk record for the home farm for the month of April last year, in gallons," said she. "I don't know what I should have done without tallies. An old forester of mine taught me the system. It's out of date now for everyone else; but my tenants respect it. One of them's coming now to see me. Oh, it doesn't matter. He has no business here out of office-hours. He's a greedy, ignorant man—very greedy or—he wouldn't come here now."

"Have you much land then?"

"Only a couple of hundred acres in hand, thank goodness! The rest is nearly all let to folk who knew my folk before me; but this Turpin is quite a new man—and a highway robber."

"But are you sure I shan't be——?"

"Certainly not. You have the right. He has none. He hasn't any children."

"Ah, the children!" I said, and slid my low chair back till it nearly touched the screen that hid them. "I wonder whether they'll come out for me."

There was a murmur of voices—Madden's and a deeper note—at the low dark side door, and a ginger-headed giant of the unmistakable tenant-farmer type, stumbled, or was pushed in.

"Come to the fire, Mr. Turpin," she said.

"If—if you please, Miss, I'll—I'll be quite well by the door." He clung to the latch as he spoke, like a frightened child. Of a sudden I realized that he was in the grip of some almost overpowering fear.

"Well?"

"About that new shed for the young stock—that was all. These first autumn storms settin' in—but I'll come again, Miss." His teeth did not chatter much more than the door-latch.

"I think not," she answered levelly. "The new shed—m'm. What did my agent write you on the 15th?"

"I—fancied p'raps that if I came to see you—ma—man to man like, Miss. But——"

His eyes rolled into every corner of the room wide with horror. He half opened the door through which he had entered, but I noticed it shut again—from without and firmly.

"He wrote what I told him," she went on. "You are overstocked already. Dunnett's Farm never carried more than fifty bullocks—even in Mr. Wright's time. And *he* used cake. You've sixty-seven and you don't cake. You've broken the lease in that respect. You're dragging the heart out of the farm."

"I'm—I'm getting some minerals—superphosphates—next week. I've as good as ordered a truck load already. I'll go down to the station to-morrow about 'em. Then I can come and see you man to man like, Miss . . . in the daylight. That gentleman's not going away, is he?" He almost shrieked.

I had only slid the chair a little further back, reaching behind me to tap on the leather of the screen, but he jumped like a rat.

"No. Please attend to me, Mr. Turpin." She turned in her chair and faced him with his back to the door. It was an old and sordid little piece of scheming that she forced from him—his plea for the new cow-shed at his landlady's expense that he might with the covered manure pay his next year's rent out of the valuation after, as she made clear, he had bled the enriched pastures to the bone. I could not but admire the intensity of his greed when I saw him out-facing for its sake whatever terror it was that ran wet on his forehead.

I ceased to tap the leather—was, indeed, calculating the cost of the shed—when I felt my relaxed hand taken and turned softly between the soft hands of a child. So at last I had triumphed. In a moment I would turn and acquaint myself with those shy folk. . . .

The little brushing kiss fell in the centre of my palm—as a gift on which the fingers

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were, once, expected to close; as the all-faithful half-reproachful signal from a waiting child not used to neglect even when grown-ups were busiest—a fragment of an old mute secret code devised very long ago. . . .

Then I knew. And it was as though I had known from the first day when I looked across the lawn at the high window. I knew and I was content.

I heard the door shut: the woman turned to me in silence.

What time passed after this I cannot tell. I was roused by the fall of a log, and mechanically put it back. It was a curiously mottled piece of birch, the layers of bark grilled by the heat.

"Now you understand?" she whispered, across the shadows.

"Yes. Thank you."

"I—I only hear them." She bowed her head in her hands. "I have no right, you know—no other right. I have neither borne nor lost—neither borne nor lost!"

"Be very glad then," said I, for my soul was torn open within me.

"Forgive me!"

She was still and I went back to my sorrow and my joy.

"It was because I loved them so," she said at last, brokenly. "*That* was why it was—even from the first—even before I knew that they—they were all I should ever have. And I loved them so!"

She stretched out her arms to the shadow, and the shadows within the shadow.

"They came because I loved them—because I needed them. I—I must have made them come. Was that wrong, think you? I wasn't cheating anybody."

"No—no!"

"I—I grant you that the toys and—and all that sort of thing were nonsense, but—but I used to hate empty rooms so when I was little." She pointed to the gallery. "And the passages all empty . . . And how could I ever bear the garden door shut? Suppose——"

"Don't—for Pity's sake, don't!" I cried. The twilight had brought a cold rain that streaked the leaded windows.

"And the same thing with keeping the fire in all night. *I* don't think it so foolish."

I looked at the hearth, saw—through tears, I believe—that there was no forbidding iron on or near it and bowed my head.

"I did all that and lots of other things—just to make believe. Then they came. I heard them; but I didn't know that they were not mine by right—till Mrs. Madden told me——"

"The butler's wife? What?"

"One of them—I heard—she saw. Hers! *Not* for me. Afterwards I began to understand that it was only because I loved them, not because . . . Oh you *must* bear or lose," she said piteously. "There is no other way, and yet they love me. Don't they?"

There was no sound in the room except the voices of the fire, but we two listened intently and she at least took comfort from what she heard. She recovered herself and half rose. I sat still in my chair.

"Don't think me a wretch to whine about myself like this, but—but I'm all in the dark, you know, and you can see."

In truth I could see, and my vision confirmed me in my resolve, though that was like the very parting of spirit and flesh. Yet a little longer I would stay, since it was for the last time.

"You think it is wrong, then?" she cried sharply, though I had said nothing.

"Not for you. A thousand times no. For you it is right . . . I'm grateful to you beyond words. For me it would be wrong. For me only. . . . "

"Why?" she said; but passed her hand before her face as she had done at our second meeting in the wood. "Oh, I see," she went on as simply as a child. "Yes, for you it would be wrong." Then with a little indrawn laugh, "and—do you remember?—I called you lucky—once—at first. You who must never come here again!"

She left me to sit a little longer, only a little longer, by the screen, and I heard the sound of her feet die out along the gallery above.

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DIAGNOSIS

By E. S. Martin

ILLUSTRATION (FRONTISPIECE) BY W. L. JACOBS

AND what shall I say to him? What shall I say?
Good man and constant, my friend and my lover.
Keep him and cherish him? Send him away?
What my heart's will is how shall I discover?

Refuse him and end it? Refuse him? For whom?
How many more princes still lurk in the wood?
Will his company gladden me more, or his room?
He may be the right one! Just think, if he should!

Accept him? Forever? As long as I live?
How can I? How dare I? Not yet: Oh not yet!
What legions of possible joys I should give!
Life filtered through him would be what I should get.

Let him come! Let him tell his own story and gain
What he wants, if he can. 'Tis not mine to confer.
'Tis for him to persuade—'tis for him to obtain
Can he win? Let him try. If he does, I concur.

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IF BIRD OR DEVIL

By Philip Loring Allen

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MAY WILSON PRESTON

G. Schmeltzer is the people's tailor, yes the very best.
He will make you dress suit, overcoat or vest.
He does pressing or mending neatly or make you finest trousers.
And the suits he makes are always satisfactory to the users.

WHOEVER found these verses on his doorstep perceived at once that Gottlieb was no ordinary tailor, and a visit to his shop only made this more certain. It was almost the lowest terms of a tailor shop, Gottlieb having neither partners nor employees nor self-heating irons; but he administered it as if he were a veritable captain of industry, and it a corporation of untold ramifications. Three months after his first customer had climbed down from the street level, he would turn over the leaves of his portentous books of samples with a musing air, as if each pattern recalled to his mind the hosts of men, now famous or in their graves, for whom he had constructed coats and trousers of those particular goods. Truth to tell, a contract for so important a work as a suit of clothes was rare enough with Gottlieb, whose precarious livelihood was gained chiefly from what he called the "pressing department." Yet long before he had conquered that world, he was reaching out for others.

"You see? Ve got a parrot department to-day," was Gottlieb's way of introducing his newest accession to his oldest customer, who was really very far from old, and took an almost childish delight in each of Gottlieb's prospective ventures. None had been so sympathetic as he when the last new department had failed by reason of the fact that goldfish will not thrive in a basement tailor's shop.

"T'ree tventy-fife," said Gottlieb. "He don't cost no more dan sefen cents a veek to feed him, and after I've learned him to talk a lot of t'ings, I sell him for—I don't know—fife hundert, six hundert dollars."

"What's his name?" asked the young man, holding up a finger which the parrot eyed distrustfully.

"Dat's what I was going to ask you to gif him a name," said Gottlieb expectantly.

"You might call him Saladin," suggested the oldest customer. "He's got a hooked beak something like a scimitar."

"Saladin," repeated the tailor. "It sounds too much like a vegetable."

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"Side poggets?" suggested Wellington, pleasantly.
—Page 145.

"Go by his nose; call him Wellington."

"Vellington, det sounds better. I guess maybe ve make him Vellington."

"Wellington, want a cracker?" asked the young man amiably.

"Dere is two t'ings," said Gottlieb, with tremendous emphasis, "dat nobody is going to be allowed to do here. One of dem is to call him Polly, and de odder is to ask him vill he haf a cracker. Dat's just where he's going to be diffunt from all de odder parrots. What's de sense if a parrot say, 'Polly vant——' I mustn't say it myself vile he's here, but you know what dey always say, and it's so foolish. Now, Vellington, I shan't learn him notting except t'ings what is nice for him to say. Somet'ing like de little boys speak in school."

"What have you thought of?"

"Dat's anoder t'ing I didn't decide yet. I could gif him plenty of t'ings out of de Cherman potes, but you see I got to sell him in English. Den I tell you besides, I vouldn't like to make a mistake and haf him speak somet'ing de customers vouldn't like, because maybe he vouldn't haf sense enough den to speak somet'ing else. You see?"

"You want to get," said the young man, "something as different as possible from the things people expect a parrot to say. You want him to surprise people every time he opens his beak, because he'll be worth just so much extra on account of the surprise."

"You got it. Now what shall I learn him?"

The young man considered. There are so few accomplishments expected of a parrot, that the field of choice seemed to be a wide one. The best-educated bird's ac-

The oldest customer brought to the shop a stylish-looking young woman.
—Page 145.

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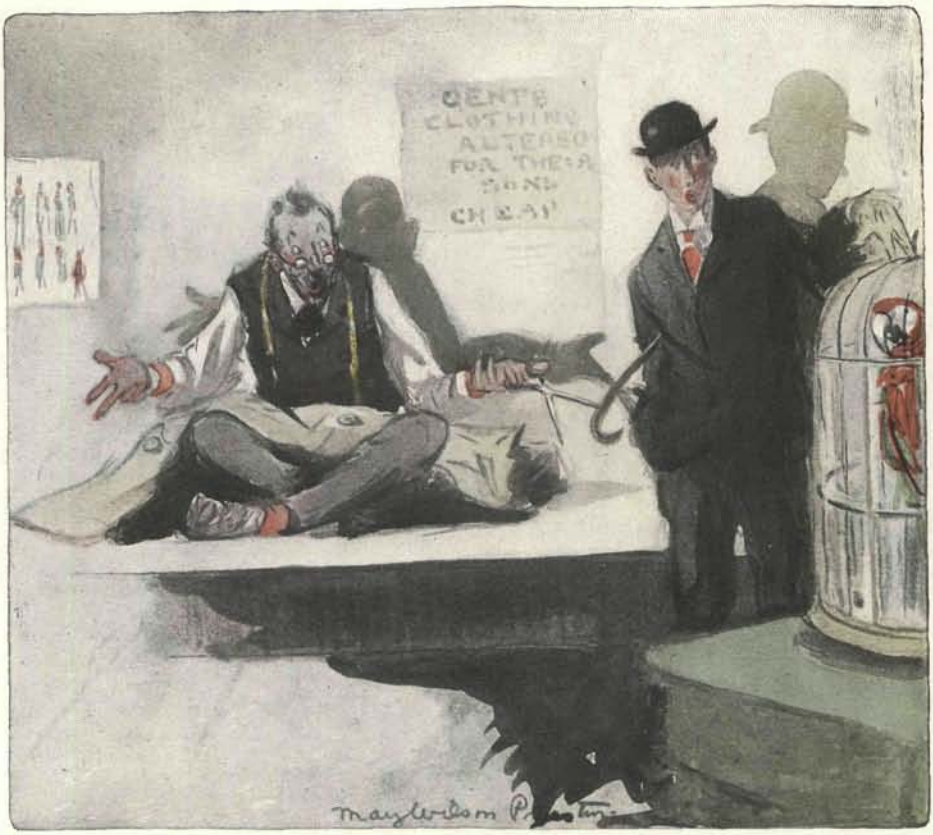

"I sell him for—I don't know—fife hundert, six hundert dollars."—Page 141.

quaintance with English literature could hardly, in the nature of things, exceed a page or two in an anthology. But here was a decision to be made which would affect the bird's whole future, to say nothing of the owner's. Something must be found not merely outside the ordinary parrot's repertoire, but essentially foreign to the bird's point of view, the acme of incongruity. To begin with, what was the bird's point of view? The house dog's friendly bark is properly translated into a cry of welcome. What do the parrot's hoarse, unstudied outcries mean? If he had the power of appreciation and free choice, what poetical motives would appeal?

These were the young man's conclusions: Romantic affection the bird certainly possessed. There are few things more sentimental than the parrot's aspect as he lays his head on one side and looks at you. One of his near relatives has even been christened the love-bird. Appreciation of nature? It must be pre-eminently a quality of a bird whose natural occupation is to climb up and down lemon trees and fly picturesquely through tropical vegetation. Sentiment and reflection? Come upon the bird alone and who can doubt that he indulges in plaintive fancies? "Why," his look seems to say, "should the mere circumstance that I have bright-colored feathers and can talk condemn me to transportation for life, while my less brilliant neighbors are still on delectable islands?" Love of home and friends? It is so strong in the parrot's breast that he will return even to the narrow quarters of his cage. Adventure? What creature goes more formidably armed, or is more ready to try conclusions with a marauding puppy or cat? Plainly, the parrot had all these. But did he have also that yet higher quality, love of country? Was it in the catalogue of the parrot's emotions? The young man thought of all the parrots of his acquaint-

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To have his brass buttons shifted an eighth of an inch one way or another.—Page 146.

ance and concluded that it was not. No, a parrot might be affectionate, imaginative, domestic, adventurous, and have the poet's eye for nature, but he was not patriotic. At least, he was less likely to be patriotic than any of these other things, and if his faculties permitted him to pick for himself, patriotic poetry would be the least probable selection.

So much, then, was gained. But the field of patriotic poetry was still inclusive. "Horatius at the Bridge," "Spartacus to the Gladiators," "Scots wha hae," "Midnight Ride of Paul Revere," "Sheridan's Ride" were all too long and of purely local application. But here was the very thing:

"Breathes there the man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land!
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned
As home his footsteps he hath turned?"

The young man recited it through to the end. Gottlieb laid down his work, and his eyes sparkled. Wellington cocked his head and listened critically.

"No parrot would ever think of that for himself, eh?" said the oldest customer.

"I vouldn't even myself," said Gottlieb.

Thereupon Wellington's education was begun.

All day long, while Gottlieb sat cross-legged on the table or labored over the pressing-board, the bird's cage hung above his head. At intervals, when he thought the bird was in a receptive mood, the tailor lined out the lesson:

"Breat's der a man vit soul so det,
Dat neffer to himself hat' said——"

Fifteen times a day, at least, this was dinned into the bird's unnoticeable and unnoticing ear. Never did educator display finer enthusiasm or more indomitable patience than Gottlieb brought to his task each morning. Yet never was there a less promising scholar than Wellington. He betrayed his contempt of the whole proceeding by a cynical twitch of the eyelid, when Gottlieb was most in earnest. The parrot in his cage was no more responsive than the ponderous iron goose upon the table.

The first complete sentence the bird ever uttered revealed how little regardful he was

At intervals, when he thought the bird was in a receptive mood, the tailor lined out the lesson.

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The Group for Liberation met in the back room of the saloon of Schmitz —Page 146.

of the great career planned for him. Gottlieb had begun as usual:

"Breat's der a man vit soul so det,
Dat neffer to himself hat' said——"

"How vill you haf de vest?" interpolated Wellington, as if to finish out the line.

Gottlieb was utterly disgusted. If the fountain of lofty sentiment was thus to be polluted by sartorial catch-phrases, it was just as well to sell the parrot at once, and buy another more open to ennobling influences. He could hardly fail to get back his investment of $3.25. He resolved to consult the oldest customer, and in the week that elapsed before seeing him, Wellington continued to absorb the talk of the shop, making it more than ever a wise policy to sell him.

"He ain't a bad parrot," said Gottlieb to the oldest customer. "He don't svear at all, and he don't say anyt'ing it's really bad for him to say. But he don't seem to be interested in nothing except de business."

The oldest customer brought to the shop, after a few days, a stylish-looking young woman who thought she should like to own a parrot.

"If he isn't a perfectly respectable bird you can have your money back," he said to her; "but I warn you beforehand, that he's utterly and hopelessly commonplace."

"Polly want a cracker?" she said; and Gottlieb, whose solicitude had once carried him to the point of flinging an uncompleted pair of trousers at a well-meaning visitor who had got no farther than "Pol——" had lost interest so entirely that he made no protest.

"Nice bird," said the young woman. "Would you like to come with me where you'll have everything in the world you want? I should like to take you away this minute, but I haven't any way of carrying you."

"Side poggets?" suggested Wellington, pleasantly.

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"Oh, you impertinent bird; I haven't any," she cried.

She did not buy Wellington after all, and Gottlieb recommenced the bird's education, though in rather a hopeless way.

It was about this time that he acquired two new customers. One was the policeman on the beat, who was morbidly conscientious about appearances, and was perpetually coming in to have his brass buttons shifted an eighth of an inch one way or another, that the coat might fit a little more snugly about his ample figure. The other was an undersized saloon-keeper named Schmitz, who never thought of calling in the services of a tailor at all, until patching became absolutely necessary. Schmitz had a mild blue eye, but his beard bristled with aggressiveness and he possessed conversational powers of the explosive sort. Gottlieb listened to him with horrified admiration when, one day, he began to discourse on the rights of man. Schmitz was, in brief, an anarchist, and in less than a month Gottlieb, who was restless, having taken up no new project since he bought the parrot, had been half fascinated and half browbeaten into regular attendance at the sessions of the Group for Liberation.

The Group for Liberation met in the back room of the saloon of Schmitz, and Gottlieb really enjoyed Schmitz's beer more than what he heard there. He was by nature both timid and conservative, and even when most under the influence of the magnetic Schmitz, could never have been classed as anything more than a philosophical anarchist of the mildest type.

Schmitz was perpetually bringing the methods of the platform into the tailor-shop, and had a peculiarly vicious way, when thus undermining society's foundations, of picking up Gottlieb's shears and jamming them into the top of the table, to mark a rhetorical climax. This was one of the few things that seemed to interest Wellington. His eye never left Schmitz while he was in the shop, but Gottlieb never realized what it portended until one beautiful spring morning when Wellington asked him in an expressive crescendo:

"Shall we let dose money hogs grind us down?" and continued with much emphasis, "Dere is no law dey didn't buy. De gofernment has no more right to make me do what I don't want to dan——"

Warm weather was coming on, and Wellington, growing more loquacious every day, revealed a familiarity with Schmitz's political philosophy which his master could not hope to equal. Gottlieb had long lived in dread that the anarchist and the policeman might meet in his shop, thus precipitating a conflict between the forces of anarchy and those of law and order. Now he was afraid to have the policeman come in at all, because of the parrot's incendiary speeches. He sewed on the brass buttons in the wrong places, and made the coat wrinkle, thinking this the best way to get rid of his inconvenient patron.

Yet his native shrewdness promptly found the one good point in the situation. Among the conservative classes he had failed to find a purchaser for Wellington, but would not his new accomplishments make a strong appeal to the ultra-radicals?

"Schmitz," he said one day, "don't you vant to buy dis parrot? He's as good a anarchist as you or me. Keep him in your back room and pretty soon efery vun of us in de vorld vill hear aboud it."

Schmitz was not one of those who advocate new social conditions because of

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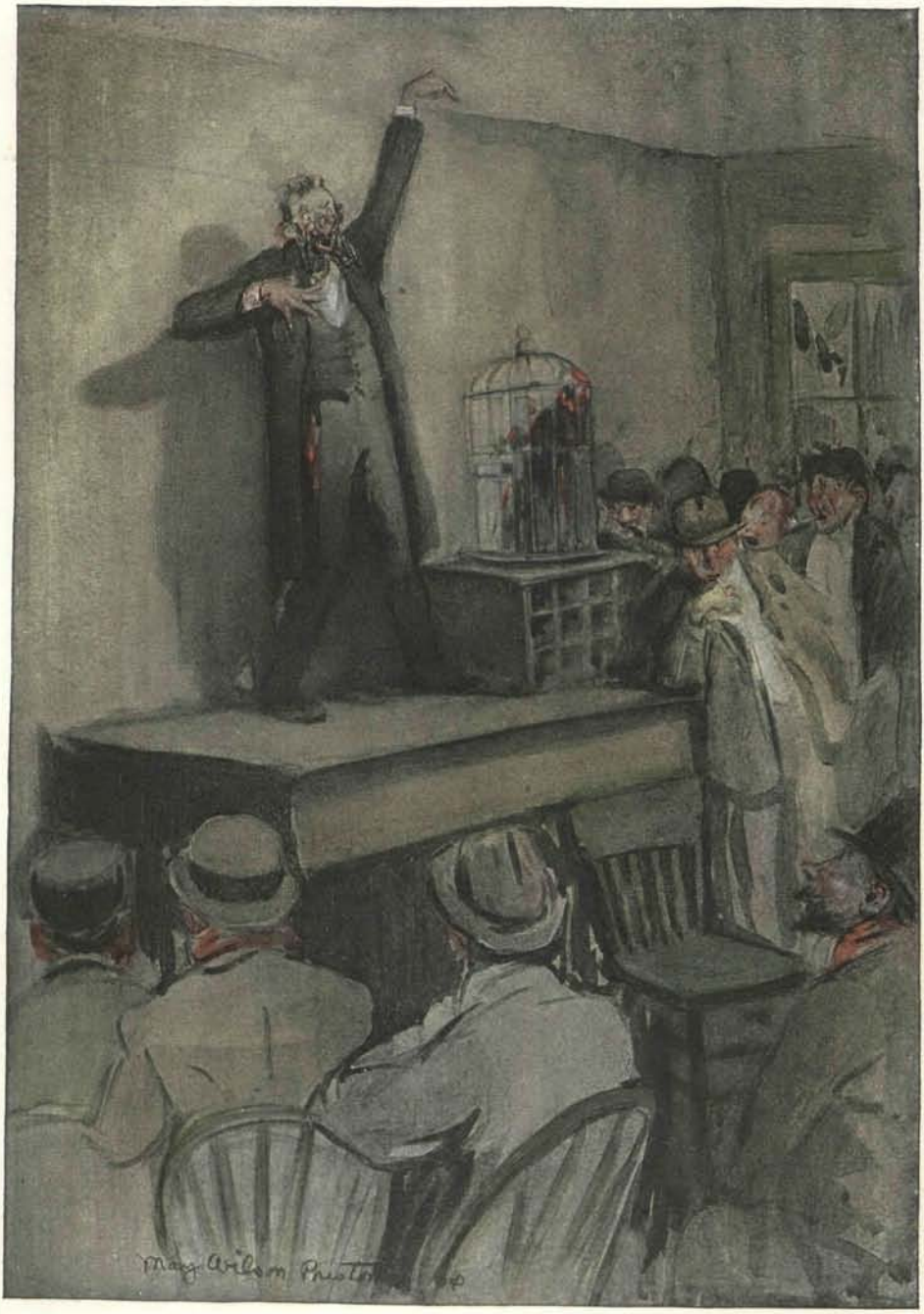

Drawn by May Wilson Preston.

"How long, how long can they keep us all slaves under that rag—that *rag?* RAG, I say!"—Page 149.

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inability to make a living under present ones. He was proud of his place, and abundantly able to see that all its accessories were as they should be. Truth to tell, the idea of acquiring Wellington had already entered his mind.

away. Accordingly, he concluded to give the bird an airing through the day outside the rear window, bringing him into the back room at night to regale the company. What enthusiasm this would arouse! Soon he would be reading accounts of himself

A vigorously sucked finger put an end to the flow of eloquence.—Page 149.

"Well," he said, doubtfully.

"Brodders, *brodders*, BRODDERS! under de red flag!" screamed Wellington, above his head.

"I take him," said Schmitz.

A somewhat ornate bar was part of the anarchist's establishment, and his first impulse was to hang the parrot's cage above it, to attract custom. He gave this up, however, on the theory that everyone to whom the bird's peculiar accomplishments would appeal was already a patron of his saloon, while strangers might be frightened

and his wonderful anarchistic parrot in the flamboyant journals of his faith—German, Yiddish, and Italian; even in the untidy letter-size sheets printed in cellars and slipped secretly from hand to hand under the noses of the Czar's myrmidons. After all, was not this just what the propaganda had lacked—something that might stir the followers of the red flag, as did the screaming war eagle the boys in blue? Might not this place be filled by the parrot—his parrot, no longer Wellington, but Kropotkin?

Gottlieb, as was his custom, occupied a

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back seat when the Group for Liberation was called to order—a paradoxical proceeding, by the way, considering the character of the organization. He did not feel himself entitled to the congratulations he knew would come, yet did not like to admit frankly that all the parrot knew had been learned in spite of his own best efforts. Still, he wanted to see how things would turn out.

Within the first five minutes, Schmitz had deftly drawn attention to the parrot, but as the bird persisted in hanging by his beak from the top of the cage and saying nothing whatever, he concluded his introduction in somewhat the spirit of the amateur conjurer who finds the half dollar at the bottom of the silk hat, when it should be in the tumbler.

"Never mind," said one of the others. "Those birds never like to talk, except when somebody else is talking. Go on with the meeting and pretty soon he'll join in."

So the meeting went on, and a glorious meeting it was. Five hundred miles away the ears of a certain governor who had recently called out militia to quell a riot must have burned as if bound in capsicum plasters that night. More distant potentates trembled on their thrones. Gottlieb himself trembled, though neither magistrate nor potentate.

At last up spoke the most fiery of them all, a visitor of renown from a distant city. From his seat he began, but in two minutes he was on his feet, and in three on the improvised rostrum. The component elements of his face were glowering spectacles, and grizzled hair which grew upward and downward with the same defiant luxuriance. As the beer mugs began to be pounded on the table, and guttural shouts of approval to come from his audience, his eloquence changed from the hoarse snarl of the wild creature at bay, to the thrilling howl of the pack's leader. The other men were out of their seats and thronged around him with excited faces.

Every living thing in the room, indeed, was excited. As the eager crowd closed about him, the orator, whose style of delivery demanded that he have not merely elbow, but wrist, hand, and finger room, had given back until he stood right beside the parrot's cage, and his hands, in their never-ending sweep, missed the wires only by fractions of inches. Wellington, as we may still call him in his changed environment, regarded these demonstrations with alarm. At first he shrank backward whenever the swinging hand went by, hitching himself over to the opposite end of his perch. But as he saw the threatening member pass by again and again without doing him bodily harm, he gathered courage and became disposed to take the aggressive. Presently he was extending his neck toward the enemy, at every gesture making more than half ready to snatch.

"Just as much tyrants they are, just as much usurpers, for all that they make the people put their little bits of dirty paper in the ballot-box! They think they have security in that, but I tell you, their flag is no redder than our blood, no whiter than our hate, no bluer than the sky of the new day we are to bring. How long, how long can they keep us all slaves under that rag —that *rag?* RAG, I say!"

Down came the hand on top of the cage, with its third finger between the wires. Never before had Wellington had such an opportunity to rise to. He acted as if a life had been spent training for that emergency. His head shot forward like the cobra's when it strikes, and the sharp edges of his beak met over the intruding finger.

The oppression of mankind at large was forgotten in the suffering of one particular man. A vigorously sucked finger put an end to the flow of eloquence. The crowd stood hushed about the sorely wounded leader—disabled, for where was his oratory when his right hand must remain motionless?

Then it was that Wellington, with ensanguined mandibles, settled his emerald plumage and regarded them all squarely—these men to whom the flags of nations were but hated symbols, and "fatherland" a name for a place of bondage.

Above the excited whispers, angry mutterings and ejaculations of pain, a voice, not clear, but distinct in utterance as that of the bird which made more sombre a certain midnight dreary, was lifted in exhortation:

> "Breat's der a man vit soul so det
> Dat neffer to himself hat' said
> 'Dis——'"

"Vellington, Vellington," shouted Gottlieb, pushing forward. "I take you back to me again. Dis is no place for neider of us!"

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THE LAST ASSET

By Edith Wharton

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RAYMOND M. CROSBY

I

"THE devil!" Paul Garnett exclaimed as he re-read his note; and the dry old gentleman who was at the moment his only neighbour in the quiet restaurant they both frequented, remarked with a smile: "You don't seem particularly annoyed at meeting him."

Garnett returned the smile. "I don't know why I apostrophized him, for he's not in the least present—except inasmuch as he may prove to be at the bottom of anything unexpected."

The old gentleman who, like Garnett, was an American, and spoke in the thin rarefied voice which seems best fitted to emit sententious truths, twisted his lean neck toward the younger man and cackled out shrewdly: "Ah, it's generally a woman who is at the bottom of the unexpected. Not," he added, leaning forward with deliberation to select a tooth-pick, "that that precludes the devil's being there too."

Garnett uttered the requisite laugh, and his neighbour, pushing back his plate, called out with a perfectly unbending American intonation: "Gassong! L'addition, silver play."

His repast, as usual, had been a simple one, and he left only thirty centimes in the plate on which his account was presented; but the waiter, to whom he was evidently a familiar presence, received the tribute with Latin affability, and hovered helpfully about the table while the old gentleman cut and lighted his cigar.

"Yes," the latter proceeded, revolving the cigar meditatively between his thin lips, "they're generally both in the same hole,

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like the owl and the prairie-dog in the natural history books of my youth. I believe it was all a mistake about the owl and the prairie-dog, but it isn't about the unexpected. The fact is, the unexpected *is* the devil—the sooner you find that out, the happier you'll be." He leaned back, tilting his smooth bald head against the blotched mirror behind him, and rambling on with gentle garrulity while Garnett attacked his omelet.

"Get your life down to routine—eliminate surprises. Arrange things so that, when you get up in the morning, you'll know exactly what is going to happen to you during the day—and the next day and the next. I don't say it's funny—it ain't. But it's better than being hit on the head by a brickbat. That's why I always take my meals at this restaurant. I know just how much onion they put in things—if I went to the next place I shouldn't. And I always take the same streets to come here—I've been doing it for ten years now. I know at which crossings to look out—I know what I'm going to see in the shop-windows. It saves a lot of wear and tear to know what's coming. For a good many years I never did know, from one minute to another, and now I like to think that everything's cut-and-dried, and nothing unexpected can jump out at me like a tramp from a ditch."

He paused calmly to knock the ashes from his cigar, and Garnett said with a smile: "Doesn't such a plan of life cut off nearly all the possibilities?"

The old gentleman made a contemptuous motion. "Possibilities of what? Of being multifariously miserable? There are lots of ways of being miserable, but there's only one way of being comfortable, and that is to stop running round after happiness. If you make up your mind not to be happy there's no reason why you shouldn't have a fairly good time."

"That was Schopenhauer's idea, I believe," the young man said, pouring his wine with the smile of youthful incredulity.

"I guess he hadn't the monopoly," responded his friend. "Lots of people have found out the secret—the trouble is that so few live up to it."

He rose from his seat, pushing the table forward, and standing passive while the waiter advanced with his shabby overcoat and umbrella. Then he nodded to Garnett, lifted his hat politely to the broad-bosomed lady behind the desk, and passed out into the street.

Garnett looked after him with a musing smile. The two had exchanged views on life for two years without so much as knowing each other's names. Garnett was a newspaper correspondent whose work kept him mainly in London, but on his periodic visits to Paris he lodged in a dingy hotel of the Latin Quarter, the chief merit of which was its nearness to the cheap and excellent restaurant where the two Americans had made acquaintance. But Garnett's assiduity in frequenting the place arose, in the end, less from the excellence of the food than from the enjoyment of his old friend's conversation. Amid the flashy sophistications of the Parisian life to which Garnett's trade introduced him, the American sage's conversation had the crisp and homely flavor of a native dish—one of the domestic compounds for which the exiled palate is supposed to yearn. It was a mark of the old man's impersonality that, in spite of the interest he inspired, Garnett had never got beyond idly wondering who he might be, where he lived, and what his occupations were. He was presumably a bachelor—a man of family ties, however relaxed, though he might have been as often absent from home would not have been as regularly present in the same place—and there was about him a boundless desultoriness which renewed Garnett's conviction that there is no one on earth as idle as an American who is not busy. From certain allusions it was plain that he had lived many years in Paris, yet he had not taken the trouble to adapt his tongue to the local inflections, but spoke French with the accent of one who has formed his conception of the language from a phrase-book.

The city itself seemed to have made as little impression on him as its speech. He appeared to have no artistic or intellectual curiosities, to remain untouched by the complex appeal of Paris, while preserving, perhaps the more strikingly from his very detachment, that odd American astuteness which seems the fruit of innocence rather than of experience. His nationality revealed itself again in a mild interest in the political problems of his adopted country, though they appeared to preoccupy him only as illustrating the boundless perversity of

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mankind. The exhibition of human folly never ceased to divert him, and though his examples of it seemed mainly drawn from the columns of one exiguous daily paper, he found there matter for endless variations on his favorite theme. If this monotony of topic did not weary the younger man, it was because he fancied he could detect under it the tragic implication of the fixed idea—of some great moral upheaval which had flung his friend stripped and starving on the desert island of the little café where they met. He hardly knew wherein he read this revelation—whether in the resigned shabbiness of the sage's dress, the impartial courtesy of his manner, or the shade of apprehension which lurked, indescribably, in his guileless yet suspicious eye. There were moments when Garnett could only define him by saying that he looked like a man who had seen a ghost.

II

An apparition almost as startling had come to Garnett himself in the shape of the mauve note received from his *concierge* as he was leaving the hotel for luncheon.

Not that, on the face of it, a missive announcing Mrs. Sam Newell's arrival at Ritz's, and her need of his presence there that afternoon at five, carried any special mark of the portentous. It was not her being at Ritz's that surprised him. The fact that she was chronically hard up, and had once or twice lately been so brutally confronted with the consequences as to accept—indeed solicit—a loan of five pounds from him: this circumstance, as Garnett knew, would never be allowed to affect the general tenor of her existence. If one came to Paris, where could one go but to Ritz's? Did he see her in some grubby hole across the river? Or in a family *pension* near the Place de l'Etoile? There was no affectation in her tendency to gravitate toward what was costliest and most conspicuous. In doing so she obeyed one of the profoundest instincts of her nature, and it was another instinct which taught her to gratify the first at any cost, even to that of dipping into the pocket of an impecunious newspaper correspondent. It was a part of her strength—and of her charm too—that she did such things naturally, openly, without any of the ugly grimaces of dissimulation or compunction.

Her recourse to Garnett had of course marked a specially low ebb in her fortunes. Save in moments of exceptional dearth she had richer sources of supply; and he was nearly sure that, by running over the "society column" of the Paris *Herald*, he should find an explanation, not perhaps of her presence at Ritz's, but of her means of subsistence there. What really perplexed him was not the financial but the social aspect of the case. When Mrs. Newell had left London in July she had told him that, between Cowes and Scotland, she and Hermy were provided for till the middle of October: after that, as she put it, they would have to look about. Why, then, when she had in her hand the opportunity of living for three months at the expense of the British aristocracy, did she rush off to Paris at heaven knew whose expense in the beginning of September? She was not a woman to act incoherently; if she made mistakes they were not of that kind. Garnett felt sure she would never willingly relax her hold on her distinguished friends—was it possible that it was they who had somewhat violently let go of her?

As Garnett reviewed the situation he began to see that this possibility had for some time been latent in it. He had felt that something might happen at any moment—and was not this the something he had obscurely foreseen? Mrs. Newell really moved too fast: her position was as perilous as that of an invading army without a base of supplies. She used up everything too quickly—friends, credit, influence, forbearance. It was so easy for her to acquire all these—what a pity she had never learned to keep them! He himself, for instance—the most insignificant of her acquisitions—was beginning to feel like a squeezed sponge at the mere thought of her; and it was this sense of exhaustion, of the inability to provide more, either materially or morally, which had provoked his exclamation on opening her note. From the first days of their acquaintance her prodigality had amazed him, but he had believed it to be surpassed by the infinity of her resources. If she exhausted old supplies she always found new ones to replace them. When one set of people began to find her impossible, another was always beginning to find her indispensable. Yes—but there were limits—there were only so many sets of

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people, at least in her social classification, and when she came to an end of them, what then? Was this flight to Paris a sign that she had come to an end—was she going to try Paris because London had failed her? The time of year precluded such a conjecture. Mrs. Newell's Paris was non-existent in September. The town was a desert of gaping trippers—he could as soon think of her seeking social restoration at Margate.

For a moment it occurred to him that she might have to come over to replenish her wardrobe; but he knew her dates too well to dwell long on this hope. It was in April and December that she visited the dressmakers: before December, he had heard her explain, one got nothing but "the American fashions." Mrs. Newell's scorn of all things American was somewhat illogically coupled with the determination to use her own Americanism to the utmost as a means of social advance. She had found out long ago that, on certain lines, it paid in London to be American, and she had manufactured for herself a personality independent of geographical or social demarcations, and presenting that remarkable blend of plantation dialect, Bowery slang and hyperbolic statement, which is the British nobility's favorite idea of an unadulterated Americanism. Mrs. Newell, for all her talents, was not naturally either humorous or hyperbolic, and there were times when it would doubtless have been a relief to her to be as monumentally stolid as some of the persons whose dulness it was her fate to enliven. It was perhaps the need of relaxing which had drawn her into her odd intimacy with Garnett, with whom she did not have to be either scrupulously English or artificially American, since the impression she made on him was of no more consequence than that which she produced on her footman. Garnett was perfectly aware that he owed his success to his insignificance, but the fact affected him only as adding one more element to his knowledge of Mrs. Newell's character. He was as ready to sacrifice his personal vanity in such a cause as he had been, at the outset of their acquaintance, to sacrifice his professional pride to the opportunity of knowing her.

When he had accepted the position of "London correspondent" (with an occasional side-glance at Paris) to the New York *Searchlight*, he had not understood that his work was to include the obligation of "interviewing"; indeed, had the possibility presented itself in advance, he would have met it by unpacking his valise and returning to the drudgery of his assistant-editorship in New York. But when, after three months in Europe, he received a letter from his chief, suggesting that he should enliven the Sunday *Searchlight* by a series of "Talks with Smart Americans in London" (beginning, say, with Mrs. Sam Newell), the change of focus already enabled him to view the proposal without passion. For his life on the edge of the great world-caldron of art, politics and pleasure—of that high-spiced brew which is nowhere else so subtly and variously compounded—had bred in him an eager appetite to taste of the heady mixture. He knew he should never have the full spoon at his lips, but he recalled the peasant-girl in one of Browning's plays, who has once eaten polenta cut with a knife which has carved an ortolan. Might not Mrs. Newell, who had so successfully cut a way into the dense and succulent mass of English society, serve as the knife to season his polenta?

He had expected, as the result of the interview, to which she promptly, almost eagerly, assented, no more than the glimpse of brightly lit vistas which a waiting messenger may catch through open doors; but instead he had found himself drawn at once into the inner sanctuary, not of London society, but of Mrs. Newell's relation to it. She had been candidly charmed by the idea of the interview: it struck him that she was conscious of the need of being freshened up. Her appearance was brilliantly fresh, with the inveterate freshness of the toilet-table; her paint was as impenetrable as armor. But her personality was a little tarnished: she was in want of social renovation. She had been doing and saying the same things for too long a time. London, Cowes, Homburg, Scotland, Monte Carlo—that had been the round since Hermy was a baby. Hermy was her daughter, Miss Hermione Newell, who was called in presently to be shown off to the interviewer and add a paragraph to the celebration of her mother's charms.

Miss Newell's appearance was so full of an unassisted freshness that for a moment Garnett made the mistake of fancying that she could fill a paragraph of her own. But

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he soon found that her vague personality was merely tributary to her parent's; that her youth and grace were, in some mysterious way, her mother's rather than her own. She smiled obediently on Garnett, but could contribute little beyond her smile and the general sweetness of her presence, to the picture of Mrs. Newell's existence which it was the young man's business to draw. And presently he found that she had left the room without his noticing it.

He learned in time that this unnoticeableness was the most conspicuous thing about her. Burning at best with a mild light, she became invisible in the glare of her mother's personality. It was in fact only as a product of her environment that poor Hermione struck the imagination. With the smartest woman in London as her guide and example she had never developed a taste for dress, and with opportunities for enlightenment from which Garnett's fancy recoiled she remained simple, unsuspicious and tender, with an inclination to good works and afternoon church, a taste for the society of dull girls, and a clinging fidelity to old governesses and retired nurse-maids. Mrs. Newell, whose boast it was that she looked facts in the face, frankly owned that she had not been able to make anything of Hermione. "If she has a rôle I haven't discovered it," she confessed to Garnett. "I've tried everything, but she doesn't fit in anywhere."

Mrs. Newell spoke as if her daughter were a piece of furniture acquired without due reflection, and for which no suitable place could be found. She got, of course, what she could out of Hermione, who wrote her notes, ran her errands, saw tiresome people for her, and occupied an intermediate office between that of lady's maid and secretary; but such small returns on her investment were not what Mrs. Newell had counted on. What was the use of producing and educating a handsome daughter if she did not, in some more positive way, contribute to her parent's advancement?

III

"It's about Hermy," Mrs. Newell said, rising from the heap of embroidered cushions which formed the background of her afternoon repose.

Her sitting-room at Ritz's was full of penetrating warmth and fragrance. Long-stemmed roses filled the vases on the chimney-piece, in which a fire sparkled with that effect of luxury which fires produce when the weather is not cold enough to justify them. On the writing-table, among notes and cards, and signed photographs of celebrities, Mrs. Newell's gold inkstand, her jewelled penholder, her heavily-monogrammed despatch-box, gave back from their expensive surfaces the glint of the flame, which sought out and magnified the orient of the pearls among the lady's laces and found a mirror in the pinky polish of her finger-tips. It was just such a scene as a little September fire, lit for show and not for warmth, would delight to dwell on and pick out in all its opulent details; and even Garnett, inured to Mrs. Newell's capacity for extracting manna from the desert, reflected that she must have found new fields to glean.

"It's about Hermy," she repeated, making room for him among the cushions. "I had to see you at once. We came over yesterday from London."

Garnett, seating himself, continued his leisurely survey of the room. In the glitter of Mrs. Newell's magnificence Hermione, as usual, faded out of sight, and he hardly noticed her mother's allusion.

"I have never seen you more resplendent," he remarked.

She received the tribute with complacency. "The rooms are not bad, are they? We came over with the Woolsey Hubbards (you've heard of them, of course?—they're from Detroit), and really they do things very decently. Their motor-car met us at Boulogne, and the courier always wires ahead to have the rooms filled with flowers. This *salon* is really a part of their suite. I simply couldn't have afforded it myself."

She delivered these facts in a high decisive voice, which had a note akin to the clink of her many bracelets and the rattle of her ringed hands against the enamelled cigarette-case which she extended to Garnett after helping herself from its contents.

"You are always meeting such charming people," said Garnett with mild irony; and, reverting to her first remark, he bethought himself to add: "I hope Miss Hermione is not ill?"

"Ill? She was never ill in her life," exclaimed Mrs. Newell, as though her daughter had been accused of an indelicacy.

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"It was only that you said you had come over on her account."

"So I have. Hermione is to be married."

Mrs. Newell brought out the words impressively, drawing back to observe their effect on her visitor. It was such that he received them with a long silent stare, which finally passed into a cry of wonder. "Married? For heaven's sake, to whom?"

Mrs. Newell continued to regard him with a smile so serene and victorious that he saw she took his somewhat unseemly astonishment as a merited tribute to her genius. Presently she extended a glittering hand and took a sheet of note paper from the blotter.

"You can have that put in to-morrow's *Herald*," she said.

Garnett, receiving the paper, read in Hermione's own finished hand: "A marriage has been arranged, and will shortly take place, between the Comte Louis du Trayas, son of the Marquis du Trayas de la Baume, and Miss Hermione Newell, daughter of Samuel C. Newell Esqre. of Elmira, N. Y. Comte Louis du Trayas belongs to one of the oldest and most distinguished families in France, and is equally well connected in England, being the nephew of Lord Saint Priscoe and a cousin of the Countess of Morningfield, whom he frequently visits at Adham and Portlow."

The perusal of this document filled Garnett with such deepening wonder that he could not, for the moment, even do justice to the strangeness of its being written out for publication in the bride's own hand. Hermione a bride! Hermione a future countess! Hermione on the brink of a marriage which would give her not only a great "situation" in the Parisian world but a footing in some of the best houses in England! Regardless of its unflattering implications, Garnett prolonged his stare of mute amazement till Mrs. Newell somewhat sharply exclaimed—"Well, didn't I always tell you that she would marry a Frenchman?"

Garnett, in spite of himself, smiled at this revised version of his hostess's frequent assertion that Hermione was too goody-goody to take in England, but that with her little dowdy air she might very well "go off" in the Faubourg if only a *dot* could be raked up for her—and the recollection flashed a new light on the versatility of Mrs. Newell's genius.

"But how did you do it—?" was on the tip of his tongue; and he had barely time to give the query the more conventional turn of: "How did it happen?"

"Oh, we were up at Glaish with the Edmund Fitzarthurs. Lady Edmund is a sort of cousin of the Morningfields', who have a shooting-lodge near Glaish—a place called Portlow—and young Trayas was there with them. Lady Edmund, who is a dear, drove Hermy over to Portlow, and the thing was done in no time. He simply fell over head and ears in love with her. You know Hermy is really very handsome in her peculiar way. I don't think you have ever appreciated her," Mrs. Newell summed up with a note of exquisite reproach.

"I've appreciated her, I assure you; but one somehow didn't think of her marrying —so soon."

"Soon? She's three-and-twenty; but you've no imagination," said Mrs. Newell; and Garnett inwardly admitted that he had not enough to soar to the heights of her invention. For the marriage, of course, was an invention of her own, a superlative stroke of business, in which he was sure the principal parties had all been passive agents, in which everyone, from the bankrupt and disreputable Fitzarthurs to the rich and immaculate Morningfields, had by some mysterious sleight of hand been made to fit into Mrs. Newell's designs. But it was not enough for Garnett to marvel at her work—he wanted to understand it, to take it apart, to find out how the trick had been done. It was true that Mrs. Newell had always said Hermy might go off in the Faubourg if she had a *dot*—but even Mrs. Newell's juggling could hardly conjure up a *dot:* such feats as she was able to perform in this line were usually made to serve her own urgent necessities. And besides, who was likely to take sufficient interest in Hermione to supply her with the means of marrying a French nobleman? The flowers ordered in advance by the Woolsey Hubbards' courier made Garnett wonder if that accomplished functionary had also wired over to have Miss Newell's settlements drawn up. But of all the comments hovering on his lips the only one he could decently formulate was the remark that he supposed Mrs. Newell and her daughter had come over to see the young man's family and make the final arrangements.

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"Oh, they're made—everything is settled," said Mrs. Newell, looking him squarely in the eye. "You're wondering, of course, about the *dot*—Frenchmen never go off their heads to the extent of forgetting *that;* or at least their parents don't allow them to."

Garnett murmured a vague assent, and she went on without the least appearance of resenting his curiosity: "It all came about so fortunately. Only fancy, just the week they met I got a little legacy from an aunt in Elmira—a good soul I hadn't seen or heard of for years. I suppose I ought to have put on mourning for her, by the way, but it would have eaten up a good bit of the legacy, and I really needed it all for poor Hermy. Oh, it's not a fortune, you understand—but the young man is madly in love, and has always had his own way, so after a lot of correspondence it's been arranged. They saw Hermy this morning, and they're enchanted."

"And the marriage takes place very soon?"

"Yes, in a few weeks, here. His mother is an invalid and couldn't have gone to England. Besides, the French don't travel. And as Hermy has become a Catholic——"

"Already?"

Mrs. Newell stared. "It doesn't take long. And it suits Hermy exactly—she can go to church so much oftener. So I thought," Mrs. Newell concluded with dignity, "that a wedding at Saint Philippe du Roule would be the most suitable thing at this season."

"Dear me," said Garnett, "I am left breathless—I can't catch up with you. I suppose even the day is fixed, though Miss Hermione doesn't mention it," and he indicated the official announcement in his hand.

Mrs. Newell laughed. "Hermy had to write that herself, poor dear, because my scrawl's too hideous—but I dictated it. No, the day isn't fixed—that's why I sent for you." There was a splendid directness about Mrs. Newell. It would never have occurred to her to pretend to Garnett that she had summoned him for the pleasure of his company.

"You've sent for me—to fix the day?" he enquired humourously.

"To remove the last obstacle to its being fixed."

"I? What kind of an obstacle could I have the least effect on?"

Mrs. Newell met his banter with a look which quelled it. "I want you to find her father."

"Her father? Miss Hermione's——?"

"My husband, of course. I suppose you know he's living."

Garnett blushed at his own clumsiness. "I—yes—that is, I really knew nothing—" he stammered, feeling that each word added to it. If Hermione was unnoticeable, Mr. Newell had always been invisible. The young man had never so much as given him a thought, and it was awkward to come on him so suddenly at a turn of the talk.

"Well, he is—living here in Paris," said Mrs. Newell, with a note of asperity which seemed to imply that her friend might have taken the trouble to post himself on this point.

"In Paris? But in that case isn't it quite simple——?"

"To find him? I daresay it won't be difficult, though he is rather mysterious. But the point is that I can't go to him—and that if I write to him he won't answer."

"Ah," said Garnett thoughtfully.

"And so you've got to find him for me, and tell him."

"Tell him what?"

"That he must come to the wedding—that we must show ourselves together at church and at the breakfast."

She delivered the behest in her sharp imperative key, the tone of the born commander. But for once Garnett ventured to question her orders.

"And supposing he won't come?"

"He must if he cares for his daughter's happiness. She can't be married without him."

"Can't be married?"

"The French are like that—especially the old families. I was given to understand at once that my husband must appear—if only to establish the fact that we're not divorced."

"Ah—you're *not*, then?" escaped from Garnett.

"Mercy, no! Divorce is stupid. They don't like it in Europe. And in this case it would have been the end of Hermy's marriage. They wouldn't think of letting their son marry the child of divorced parents."

"How fortunate, then——"

"Yes; but I always think of such things

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"Ah, here is one of them now."—Page 158.

Drawn by Raymond M. Crosby.

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beforehand. And of course I've told them that my husband will be present."

"You think he will consent?"

"No; not at first; but you must make him. You must tell him how sweet Hermione is—and you must see Louis, and be able to describe their happiness. You must dine here to-night—he is coming. We're all dining with the Hubbards, and they expect you. They have given Hermy some very good diamonds—though I should have preferred a cheque, as she'll be horribly poor. But I think Kate Hubbard means to do something about the trousseau—Hermy is at Paquin's with her now. You've no idea how delightful all our friends have been. —Ah, here is one of them now," she broke off smiling, as the door opened to admit, without preliminary announcement, a gentleman so glossy and ancient, with such a fixed unnatural freshness of smile and eye, that he gave Garnett the effect of having been embalmed and then enamelled. It needed not the exotic-looking ribbon in the visitor's button-hole, nor Mrs. Newell's introduction of him as her friend Baron Schenkelderff, to assure Garnett of his connection with a race as ancient as his appearance.

Baron Schenkelderff greeted his hostess with paternal playfulness, and the young man with an ease which might have been acquired on the Stock Exchange and in the dressing-rooms of "leading ladies." He spoke a faultless, colourless English, from which one felt he might pass with equal mastery to half a dozen other languages. He enquired patronizingly for the excellent Hubbards, asked his hostess if she did not mean to give him a drop of tea and a cigarette, remarked that he need not ask if Hermione was still closeted with the dressmaker, and, on the waiter's coming in answer to his ring, ordered the tea himself, and added a request for *fine champagne*. It was not the first time that Garnett had seen such minor liberties taken in Mrs. Newell's drawing-room, but they had hitherto been taken by persons who had at least the superiority of knowing what they were permitting themselves, whereas the young man felt almost sure that Baron Schenkelderff's manner was the most distinguished he could achieve; and this deepened the disgust with which, as the minutes passed, he yielded to the conviction that the Baron was Mrs. Newell's aunt.

IV

GARNETT had always foreseen that Mrs. Newell might some day ask him to do something he should greatly dislike. He had never gone so far as to conjecture what it might be, but had simply felt that if he allowed his acquaintance with her to pass from spectatorship to participation he must be prepared to find himself, at any moment, in a queer situation.

The moment had come; and he was relieved to find that he could meet it by refusing her request. He had not always been sure that she would leave him this alternative. She had a way of involving people in her complications without their being aware of it, and Garnett had pictured himself in holes so tight that there might not be room for a wriggle. Happily in this case he could still move freely. Nothing compelled him to act as an intermediary between Mrs. Newell and her husband, and it was preposterous to suppose that, even in a life of such perpetual upheaval as hers, there were no roots which struck deeper than her casual intimacy with himself. She had simply laid hands on him because he happened to be within reach, and he would put himself out of reach by leaving for London on the morrow.

Having thus inwardly asserted his independence, he felt free to let his fancy dwell on the strangeness of the situation. He had always supposed that Mrs. Newell, in her flight through life, must have thrown a good many victims to the wolves, and had assumed that Mr. Newell had been among the number. That he had been dropped overboard at an early stage in the lady's career seemed probable from the fact that neither his wife nor his daughter ever mentioned him. Mrs. Newell was incapable of reticence, and if her husband had still been an active element in her life he would certainly have figured in her conversation. Garnett, if he thought of the matter at all, had concluded that divorce must long since have eliminated Mr. Newell; but he now saw how he had underrated his friend's faculty for using up the waste material of life. She had always struck him as the most extravagant of women, yet it turned out that by a miracle of thrift she had for years kept a superfluous husband on the chance that he might some day be useful to

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Drawn by Raymond M. Crosby.

As Hermione entered the vestibule, he advanced quietly to meet her.—Page 167.

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her. The day had come, and Mr. Newell was to be called from his obscurity. Garnett wondered what had become of him in the interval, and in what shape he would respond to the evocation. The fact that his wife feared he might not respond to it at all, seemed to show that his exile was voluntary, or had at least come to appear preferable to other alternatives; but if that were the case it was curious that he should not have taken legal means to free himself. He could hardly have had his wife's motives for wishing to maintain the vague tie between them; but conjecture lost itself in trying to picture what his point of view was likely to be, and Garnett, on his way to the Hubbards' dinner that evening, could not help regretting that circumstances denied him the opportunity of meeting so enigmatic a person. The young man's knowledge of Mrs. Newell's methods made him feel that her husband might be an interesting study. This, however, did not affect his resolve to keep clear of the business. He entered the Hubbards' dining-room with the firm intention of refusing to execute Mrs. Newell's commission, and if he changed his mind in the course of the evening it was not owing to that lady's persuasions.

Garnett's curiosity as to the Hubbards' share in Hermione's marriage was appeased before he had been seated five minutes at their table.

Mrs. Woolsey Hubbard was an expansive blonde, whose ample but disciplined outline seemed the result of a well-matched struggle between her cook and her corset-maker. She talked a great deal of what was appropriate in dress and conduct, and seemed to regard Mrs. Newell as a final arbiter on both points. To do or to wear anything inappropriate would have been extremely mortifying to Mrs. Hubbard, and she was evidently resolved, at the price of eternal vigilance, to prove her familiarity with what she frequently referred to as "the right thing." Mr. Hubbard appeared to have no such preoccupations. Garnett, if called upon to describe him, would have done so by saying that he was the American who always pays. The young man, in the course of his foreign wanderings, had come across many fellow-citizens of Mr. Hubbard's type, in the most diverse company and surroundings; and wherever they were to be found, they always had their hands in their pockets. Mr. Hubbard's standard of gentility was the extent of a man's capacity to "foot the bill"; and as no one but an occasional compatriot cared to dispute the privilege with him, he seldom had reason to doubt his social superiority.

Garnett, nevertheless, did not believe that this lavish pair were, as Mrs. Newell would have phrased it, "putting up" Hermione's *dot*. They would go very far in diamonds, but they would hang back from securities. Their readiness to pay was indefinably mingled with a dread of being expected to, and their prodigalities would take flight at the first hint of coercion. Mrs. Newell, who had had a good deal of experience in managing this type of millionaire, could be trusted not to arouse their susceptibilities, and Garnett was therefore certain that the chimerical legacy had been extracted from other pockets. There were none in view but those of Baron Schenkelderff, who, seated at Mrs. Hubbard's right, with a new order in his button-hole, and a fresh glaze upon his features, enchanted that lady by his careless references to crowned heads and his condescending approval of the champagne. Garnett was more than ever certain that it was the Baron who was paying; and it was this conviction which made him suddenly feel that, at any cost, Hermione's marriage must take place. He had felt no special interest in the marriage except as one more proof of Mrs. Newell's extraordinary capacity; but now it appealed to him from the girl's own stand-point. For he saw, with a touch of compunction, that in the mephitic air of her surroundings a love-story of surprising freshness had miraculously flowered. He had only to intercept the glances which the young couple exchanged to find himself transported to the candid region of romance. It was evident that Hermione adored and was adored; that the lovers believed in each other and in every one about them, and that even the legacy of the defunct aunt had not been too great a strain on their faith in human nature.

His first glance at the Comte Louis du Trayas showed Garnett that, by some marvel of fitness, Hermione had happened upon a kindred nature. If the young man's long mild features and short-sighted glance revealed no special force of character, they showed a benevolence and simplicity as incorruptible as her own, and declared that

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their possessor, whatever his failings, would never imperil the illusions she had so miraculously preserved. The fact that the girl took her good fortune naturally, and did not regard herself as suddenly snatched from the jaws of death, added poignancy to the situation; for if she missed this way of escape, and was thrown back on her former life, the day of discovery could not be long deferred. It made Garnett shiver to think of her growing old between her mother and Schenkelderff, or such successors of the Baron's as might probably attend on Mrs. Newell's waning fortunes; for it was clear to him that the Baron marked the first stage in his friend's decline. When Garnett took leave that evening he had promised Mrs. Newell that he would try to find her husband.

V

If Mr. Newell read in the papers the announcement of his daughter's marriage it did not cause him to lift the veil of seclusion in which his wife represented him as shrouded.

A round of the American banks in Paris failed to give Garnett his address, and it was only in chance talk with one of the young secretaries of the Embassy that he was put on Mr. Newell's track. The secretary's father, it appeared, had known the Newells some twenty years earlier. He had had business relations with Mr. Newell, who was then a man of property, with factories or something of the kind, the narrator thought, somewhere in Western New York. There had been at this period, for Mrs. Newell, a phase of large hospitality and showy carriages in Washington and at Narragansett. Then her husband had had reverses, had lost heavily in Wall Street, and had finally drifted abroad and been lost to sight. The young man did not know at what point in his financial decline Mr. Newell had parted company with his wife and daughter; "though you may bet your hat," he philosophically concluded, "that the old girl hung on as long as there were any pickings." He did not himself know Mr. Newell's address, but opined that it might be extracted from a certain official at the Consulate, if Garnett could give a sufficiently good reason for the request; and here in fact Mrs. Newell's emissary learned that her husband was to be found in an obscure street of the Luxembourg quarter.

In order to be near the scene of action, Garnett went to breakfast at his usual haunt, determined to despatch his business as early in the day as politeness allowed. The head waiter welcomed him to a table near that of the transatlantic sage, who sat in his customary corner, his head tilted back against the blistered mirror at an angle suggesting that in a freer civilization his feet would have sought the same level. He greeted Garnett affably and the two exchanged their usual generalizations on life till the sage rose to go; whereupon it occurred to Garnett to accompany him. His friend took the offer in good part, merely remarking that he was going to the Luxembourg gardens, where it was his invariable habit, on good days, to feed the sparrows with the remains of his breakfast roll; and Garnett replied that, as it happened, his own business lay in the same direction.

"Perhaps, by the way," he added, "you can tell me how to find the rue Panonceaux where I must go presently. I thought I knew this quarter fairly well, but I have never heard of it."

His companion came to a sudden halt on the narrow sidewalk, to the confusion of the dense and desultory traffic which marks the old streets of the Latin quarter. He fixed his mild eye on Garnett and gave a twist to the cigar which lingered in the corner of his mouth.

"The rue Panonceaux? It *is* an out of the way hole, but I can tell you how to find it," he answered.

He made no motion to do so, however, but continued to bend on the young man the full force of his interrogative gaze; then he added abruptly: "Would you mind telling me your object in going there?"

Garnett looked at him with surprise: a question so unblushingly personal was strangely out of keeping with his friend's usual attitude of detachment. Before he could reply, however, the other had quietly continued: "Do you happen to be in search of Samuel C. Newell?"

"Why, yes, I am," said Garnett with a start of conjecture.

His companion uttered a sigh. "I supposed so," he said resignedly; "and in that case," he added, "we may as well have the matter out in the Luxembourg."

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Garnett had halted before him with deepening astonishment. "But you don't mean to tell me——?" he stammered.

The little man made a motion of assent. "I am Samuel C. Newell," he said drily; "and if you have no objection, I prefer not to break through my habit of feeding the sparrows. We are five minutes late as it is."

He quickened his pace without awaiting any reply from Garnett, who walked beside him in unsubdued wonder till they reached the Luxembourg gardens, where Mr. Newell, making for one of the less frequented alleys, seated himself on a bench and drew the fragment of a roll from his pocket. His coming was evidently expected, for a shower of little dusky bodies at once descended on him, and the gravel fluttered with battling wings and beaks as he distributed his dole with impartial gestures.

It was not till the ground was white with crumbs, and the first frenzy of his pensioners appeased, that he turned to Garnett and said: "I presume, sir, that you come from my wife."

Garnett coloured with embarrassment: the more simply the old man took his mission the more complicated it appeared to himself.

"From your wife—and from Miss Newell," he said at length. "You have perhaps heard that she is to be married."

"Oh, yes—I read the *Herald* pretty faithfully," said Miss Newell's parent, shaking out another handful of crumbs.

Garnett cleared his throat. "Then you have no doubt thought it natural that, under the circumstances, they should wish to communicate with you."

The sage continued to fix his attention on the sparrows. "My wife," he remarked, "might have written to me."

"Mrs. Newell was afraid she might not hear from you in reply."

"In reply? Why should she? I suppose she merely wishes to announce the marriage. She knows I have no money left to buy wedding-presents," said Mr. Newell astonishingly.

Garnett felt his colour deepen: he had a vague sense of standing as the representative of something guilty and enormous, with which he had rashly identified himself.

"I don't think you understand," he said. "Mrs. Newell and your daughter have asked me to see you because they are anxious that you should consent to appear at the wedding."

Mr. Newell, at this, ceased to give his attention to the birds, and turned a compassionate gaze upon Garnett.

"My dear sir—I don't know your name—" he remarked, "would you mind telling me how long you have been acquainted with Mrs. Newell?" And without waiting for an answer he added judicially: "If you wait long enough she will ask you to do some very disagreeable things for her."

This echo of his own thoughts gave Garnett a sharp twinge of discomfort, but he made shift to answer good-humouredly: "If you refer to my present errand, I must tell you that I don't find it disagreeable to do anything which may be of service to Miss Hermione."

Mr. Newell fumbled in his pocket, as though searching unavailingly for another morsel of bread; then he said: "From her point of view I shall not be the most important person at the ceremony."

Garnett smiled. "That is hardly a reason——" he began; but he was checked by the brevity of tone with which his companion replied: "I am not aware that I am called upon to give you my reasons."

"You are certainly not," the young man rejoined, "except in so far as you are willing to consider me as the messenger of your wife and daughter."

"Oh, I accept your credentials," said the other with his dry smile; "what I don't recognize is their right to send a message."

This reduced Garnett to silence, and after a moment's pause Mr. Newell drew his watch from his pocket.

"I am sorry to cut the conversation short, but my days are mapped out with a certain regularity, and this is the hour for my nap." He rose as he spoke and held out his hand with a glint of melancholy humour in his small clear eyes.

"You dismiss me, then? I am to take back a refusal?" the young man exclaimed.

"My dear sir, those ladies have got on very well without me for a number of years: I imagine they can put through this wedding without my help."

"You are mistaken, then; if it were not for that I shouldn't have undertaken this errand."

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Mr. Newell paused as he was turning away. "Not for what?" he enquired.

"The fact that, as it happens, the wedding can't be put through without your help."

Mr. Newell's thin lips formed a noiseless whistle. "They've got to have my consent, have they? Well, is he a good young man?"

"The bridegroom?" Garnett echoed in surprise. "I hear the best accounts of him—and Miss Newell is very much in love."

Her parent met this with an odd smile. "Well, then, I give my consent—it's all I've got left to give," he added philosophically.

Garnett hesitated. "But if you consent—if you approve—why do you refuse your daughter's request?"

Mr. Newell looked at him a moment. "Ask Mrs. Newell!" he said. And as Garnett was again silent, he turned away with a slight gesture of leave-taking.

But in an instant the young man was at his side. "I will not ask your reasons, sir," he said, "but I will give you mine for being here. Miss Newell cannot be married unless you are present at the ceremony. The young man's parents know that she has a father living, and they give their consent only on condition that he appears at her marriage. I believe it is customary in old French families——."

"Old French families be damned!" said Mr. Newell with sudden vigour. "She had better marry an American." And he made a more decided motion to free himself from Garnett's importunities.

But his resistance only strengthened the young man's. The more unpleasant the latter's task became, the more unwilling he grew to see his efforts end in failure. During the three days which had been consumed in his quest it had become clear to him that the bridegroom's parents, having been surprised into a reluctant consent, were but too ready to withdraw it on the plea of Mr. Newell's non-appearance. Mrs. Newell, on the last edge of tension, had confided to Garnett that the Morningfields were "being nasty"; and he could picture the whole powerful clan, on both sides of the Channel, arrayed in a common resolve to exclude poor Hermione from their ranks. The very inequality of the contest stirred his blood, and made him vow that in this case at least the sins of the parents should not be visited on the children. In his talk with the young secretary he had obtained some glimpses of Baron Schenkelderff's past which fortified this resolve. The Baron, at one time a familiar figure in a much-observed London set, had been mixed up in an ugly money-lending business ending in suicide, which had excluded him from the society most accessible to his race. His alliance with Mrs. Newell was doubtless a desperate attempt at rehabilitation, a forlorn hope on both sides, but likely to be an enduring tie because it represented, to both partners, their last chance of escape from social extinction. That Hermione's marriage was a mere stake in their game did not in the least affect Garnett's view of its urgency. If on their part it was a sordid speculation, to her it had the freshness of the first wooing. If it made of her a mere pawn in their hands, it would put her, so Garnett hoped, beyond farther risk of such base uses; and to achieve this had become a necessity to him.

The sense that, if he lost sight of Mr. Newell, the latter might not easily be found again, nerved Garnett to hold his ground in spite of the resistance he encountered; and he tried to put the full force of his plea into the tone with which he cried: "Ah, you don't know your daughter!"

VI

Mrs. Newell, that afternoon, met him on the threshold of her sitting-room with a "Well?" of pent-up anxiety.

In the room itself, Baron Schenkelderff sat with crossed legs and head thrown back, in an attitude which he did not see fit to alter at the young man's approach.

Garnett hesitated; but it was not the summariness of the Baron's greeting which he resented.

"You've found him?" Mrs. Newell exclaimed.

"Yes; but——"

She followed his glance and answered it with a slight shrug. "I can't take you into my room, because there's a dressmaker there, and she won't go because she is waiting to be paid. Schenkelderff," she exclaimed, "you're not wanted; please go and look out of the window."

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The Baron rose and, lighting a cigarette, laughingly retired to the embrasure. Mrs. Newell flung herself down and signed to Garnett to take a seat at her side.

"Well—you've found him? You've talked with him?"

"Yes; I have talked with him—for an hour."

She made an impatient movement. "That's too long! Does he refuse?"

"He doesn't consent."

"Then you mean——?"

"He wants time to think it over."

"Time? There *is* no time—did you tell him so?"

"I told him so; but you must remember that he has plenty. He has taken twenty-four hours."

Mrs. Newell groaned. "Oh, that's too much. When he thinks things over he always refuses."

"Well, he would have refused at once if I had not agreed to the delay."

She rose nervously from her seat and pressed her hands to her forehead. "It's too hard, after all I've done! The trousseau is ordered—think how disgraceful! You must have managed him badly; I'll go and see him myself."

The Baron, at this, turned abruptly from his study of the Place Vendôme.

"My dear creature, for heaven's sake don't spoil everything!" he exclaimed.

Mrs. Newell coloured furiously. "What's the meaning of that brilliant speech?"

"I was merely putting myself in the place of a man on whom you have ceased to smile."

He picked up his hat and stick, nodded knowingly to Garnett, and walked toward the door with an air of creaking jauntiness.

But on the threshold Mrs. Newell waylaid him.

"Don't go—I must speak to you," she said, following him into the antechamber; and Garnett remembered the dress-maker who was not to be dislodged from her bedroom.

In a moment Mrs. Newell returned, with a small flat packet which she vainly sought to dissemble in an inaccessible pocket.

"He makes everything too odious!" she exclaimed; but whether she referred to her husband or the Baron it was left to Garnett to decide.

She sat silent, nervously twisting her cigarette-case between her fingers, while her visitor rehearsed the details of his conversation with Mr. Newell. He did not indeed tell her the arguments he had used to shake her husband's resolve, since in his eloquent sketch of Hermione's situation there had perforce entered hints unflattering to her mother; but he gave the impression that his hearer had in the end been moved, and for that reason had consented to defer his refusal.

"Ah, it's not that—it's to prolong our misery!" Mrs. Newell exclaimed; and after a moment she added drearily: "He has been waiting for such an opportunity for years."

It seemed needless for Garnett to protract his visit, and he took leave with the promise to report at once the result of his final talk with Mr. Newell. But as he was passing through the ante-chamber a side-door opened and Hermione stood before him. Her face was flushed and shaken out of its usual repose of line, and he saw at once that she had been waiting for him.

"Mr. Garnett!" she said in a whisper.

He paused, considering her with surprise: he had never supposed her capable of such emotion as her voice and eyes revealed.

"I want to speak to you; we are quite safe here. Mamma is with the dress-maker," she explained, closing the door behind her, while Garnett laid aside his hat and stick.

"I am at your service," he said.

"You have seen my father? Mamma told me that you were to see him to-day," the girl went on, standing close to him in order that she might not have to raise her voice.

"Yes; I have seen him," Garnett replied with increasing wonder. Hermione had never before mentioned her father to him, and it was by a slight stretch of veracity that he had included her name in her mother's plea to Mr. Newell. He had supposed her to be either unconscious of the transaction, or else too much engrossed in her own happiness to give it a thought; and he had forgiven her the last alternative in consideration of the abnormal character of her filial relations. But now he saw that he must readjust his view of her.

"You went to ask him to come to my wedding; I know about it," Hermione continued. "Of course it is the custom—people will think it odd if he does not

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come." She paused, and then asked: "Does he consent?"

"No; he has not yet consented."

"Ah, I thought so when I saw Mamma just now!"

"But he hasn't quite refused—he has promised to think it over."

"But he hated it—he hated the idea?"

Garnett hesitated. "It seemed to arouse painful associations."

"Ah, it would—it would!" she exclaimed.

He was astonished at the passion of her accent; astonished still more at the tone with which she went on, laying her hand on his arm: "Mr. Garnett, he must not be asked—he has been asked too often to do things that he hated!"

Garnett looked at the girl with a shock of awe. What abysses of knowledge did her purity hide?

"But, my dear Miss Hermione——" he began.

"I know what you are going to say," she interrupted him. "It is necessary that he should be present at the marriage, or the du Trayas will break it off. They don't want it very much, at any rate," she added with a strange candour, "and they will not be sorry, perhaps—for of course Louis would have to obey them."

"So I explained to your father," Garnett assured her.

"Yes—yes; I knew you would put it to him. But that makes no difference, Mr. Garnett. He must not be forced to come unwillingly."

"But if he sees the point—after all, no one can force him!"

"No; but if it is painful to him—if it reminds him too much . . . Oh, Mr. Garnett, I was not a child when he left us. . . . I was old enough to see . . . to see how it must hurt him even now to be reminded. Peace was all he asked for, and I want him to be left in peace!"

Garnett paused in deep embarrassment. "My dear child, there is no need to remind you that your own future——"

She had a gesture that recalled her mother. "My future must take care of itself; he must not be made to see us!" she said imperatively. And as Garnett remained silent she went on: "I have always hoped he did not hate me, but he would hate me now if he were forced to see me."

"Not if he could see you at this moment!" he exclaimed.

She lifted her face with swimming eyes. "Well, go to him, then; tell him what I have said to you!"

Garnett continued to stand before her, deeply struck. "It might be the best thing," he reflected inwardly; but he did not give utterance to the thought. He merely put out his hand, holding Hermione's in a long pressure.

"I will do whatever you wish," he replied.

"You understand that I am in earnest?" she urged tenaciously.

"I am quite sure of it."

"Then I want you to repeat to him what I have said—I want him to be left undisturbed. I don't want him ever to hear of us again!"

The next day, at the appointed hour, Garnett resorted to the Luxembourg gardens, which Mr. Newell had named as a meeting-place in preference to his own lodgings. It was clear that he did not wish to admit the young man any further into his privacy than the occasion required, and the extreme shabbiness of his dress hinted that pride might be the cause of his reluctance.

Garnett found him feeding the sparrows, but he desisted at the young man's approach, and said at once: "You will not thank me for bringing you all this distance."

"If that means that you are going to send me away with a refusal, I have come to spare you the necessity," Garnett answered.

Mr. Newell turned on him a glance of undisguised wonder, in which an undertone of disappointment might almost have been detected.

"Ah—they've got no use for me, after all?" he said ironically.

Garnett, in reply, related without comment his conversation with Hermione, and the message with which the girl had charged him. He remembered her words exactly and repeated them without modification, heedless of what they implied or revealed.

Mr. Newell listened with an immovable face, occasionally casting a crumb to his impatient flock. When Garnett ended he asked drily: "Does her mother know of this?"

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"Assuredly not!" cried Garnett with a movement of disgust.

"You must pardon me; but Mrs. Newell is a very ingenious woman." Mr. Newell shook out his remaining crumbs and turned thoughtfully toward Garnett.

"You believe it is quite clear to Hermione that these people will use my refusal as a pretext for backing out of the marriage?"

"Perfectly clear—she told me so herself."

"Doesn't she consider the young man rather chicken-livered?"

"No; he has already put up a big fight for her, and you know the French look at these things differently. He is only twenty-three, and his marrying against his parents' approval is in itself an act of heroism."

"Yes; I believe they look at it that way," Mr. Newell assented. He rose and picked up the half-smoked cigar which he had laid on the bench beside him.

"What do they wear at these French weddings, anyhow? A dress-suit, isn't it?" he asked abruptly.

The question was such a surprise to Garnett that for the moment he could only stammer out—"You consent then? I may go and tell her?"

"You may tell my girl—yes." He gave a vague laugh and added: "One way or another, my wife always gets what she wants."

VII

Mr. Newell's consent brought with it no accompanying concessions. In the first flush of his success, Garnett had pictured himself as bringing together the father and daughter, and hovering in an attitude of benediction over a family group in which Mrs. Newell did not very distinctly figure.

But Mr. Newell's conditions were inflexible. He would "see the thing through" for his daughter's sake; but he stipulated that in the meantime there should be no meetings or further communications of any kind. He agreed to be ready when Garnett called for him, on the appointed hour on the wedding-day; but until then he begged to be left alone. To this decision he adhered immovably, and when Garnett conveyed it to Hermione she accepted it with a deep look of understanding. As for Mrs. Newell, she was too much engrossed in the nuptial preparations to give her husband another thought. She had gained her point, she had disarmed her foes, and in the first flush of success she had no time to remember by what means her victory had been won. Even Garnett's services received little recognition, unless he found them sufficiently compensated by the new look in Hermione's eyes.

The principal figures in Mrs. Newell's foreground were the Woolsey Hubbards and Baron Schenkelderff. With these she was in hourly consultation, and Mrs. Hubbard went about aureoled with the importance of her close connection with an "aristocratic marriage," and dazzled by the Baron's familiarity with the intricacies of the Almanach de Gotha. In his society and Mrs. Newell's, Mrs. Hubbard evidently felt that she had penetrated to the sacred precincts where "the right thing" flourished in its native soil. As for Hermione, her look of happiness had returned, but with an undertint of melancholy, visible perhaps only to Garnett, but to him always hauntingly present. Outwardly she sank back into her passive self, resigned to serve as the brilliant lay-figure on which Mrs. Newell hung the trophies of conquest. Preparations for the wedding were zealously pressed. Mrs. Newell knew the danger of giving people time to think things over, and her fears about her husband being allayed, she began to dread a new attempt at evasion on the part of the bridegroom's family.

"The sooner it's over the sounder I shall sleep!" she declared to Garnett; and all the mitigations of art could not conceal the fact that she was desperately in need of that restorative. There were moments, indeed, when he was sorrier for her than for her husband or her daughter; so black and unfathomable appeared the abyss into which she must slip back if she lost her hold on this last spar of safety.

But she did not lose her hold: his own experience, as well as her husband's declaration, might have told him that she always got what she wanted. How much she had wanted this particular thing was shown by the way in which, on the last day, when all peril was over, she bloomed out in renovated splendour. It gave Garnett a shivering sense of the ugliness of the alternative which had confronted her.

The day came; the showy coupé provided by Mrs. Newell presented itself punct-

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ually at Garnett's door, and the young man entered it and drove to the rue Panonceaux. It was a little melancholy back street, with lean old houses sweating rust and damp, and glimpses of pit-like gardens, black and sunless, between walls bristling with iron spikes. On the narrow pavement a blind man pottered along led by a red-eyed poodle: a little farther on a dishevelled woman sat grinding coffee on the threshold of a dirty *buvette*. The bridal carriage stopped before one of the doorways, with a clatter of hoofs and harness which drew the neighbourhood to its windows, and Garnett started to mount the cold ill-smelling stairs to the fourth floor, on which he learned from the *concierge* that Mr. Newell lodged. But half-way up he met the latter descending, and without a word they turned and went down together.

Hermione's parent wore his usual imperturbable look, and his eye seemed as full as ever of generalizations on human folly; but there was something oddly shrunken and submerged in his appearance, as though he had grown smaller or his clothes larger. And on the last hypothesis Garnett paused—for it became suddenly evident to him that Mr. Newell had hired his dress-suit.

Seated at the young man's side on the satin cushions, he remained silent while the carriage rolled smoothly and rapidly through the net-work of streets leading to the Boulevard Saint-Michel; only once he remarked, glancing at the elaborate fittings of the coupé: "Is this Mrs. Newell's carriage?"

"I believe so—yes," Garnett assented, with the guilty sense that, in defining that lady's possessions it was impossible not to trespass upon the property of her friends.

Mr. Newell made no further comment, but presently requested his companion to rehearse to him once more the exact duties which were to devolve on him during the coming ceremony. Having mastered these he remained silent, fixing a dry speculative eye on the fugitive panorama of the brilliant streets, till the carriage drew up at the entrance of Saint Philippe du Roule.

With the same air of composure he followed his guide through the mob of spectators, and up the crimson velvet steps, at the head of which, but for a word from Garnett, a formidable Suisse glittering with cocked hat and mace would have checked the advance of the small crumpled figure so oddly out of keeping with the magnificence of the assembled bridal party. The French fashion prescribing that the family *cortège* shall follow the bride to the altar, the vestibule of the church was thronged with the participators in the coming procession; but if Mr. Newell felt any nervousness at his sudden projection into this unfamiliar group, nothing in his look or manner betrayed it. He stood beside Garnett till a white-favoured carriage, dashing up to the church with a superlative glitter of highly groomed horse-flesh and silver-plated harness, deposited the snowy apparition of the bride, supported by her mother; then, as Hermione entered the vestibule, he advanced quietly to meet her.

The girl, wrapped in the haze of her bridal veil, and a little confused, perhaps, by the anticipation of the meeting, paused a moment as if in doubt, before the small oddly-clad figure which blocked her path—a horrible moment to Garnett, who felt a pang of misery at this unconscious satire on the infallibility of the filial instinct. He longed to make some sign, to break in some way the dreadful pause of uncertainty; but before he could move he saw Mrs. Newell give her daughter a sharp push, he saw a blush of compunction flood Hermione's face, and the girl, throwing back her veil, bent her tall head and flung her arms about her father.

Mr. Newell emerged unshaken from the embrace: it seemed to have no effect beyond giving an odder twist to his tie. He stood beside his daughter till the church doors were thrown open; then, at a sign from the verger, he gave her his arm, and the strange couple, with the long train of fashion and finery in their wake, started on their march to the altar.

Garnett had already slipped into the church and secured a post of vantage which gave him a side-view over the assemblage. The building was thronged—Mrs. Newell had attained her ambition and given Hermione a smart wedding. Garnett's eye travelled curiously from one group to another—from the numerous representatives of the bridegroom's family, all stamped with the same air of somewhat dowdy distinction, the air of having had their thinking done for them for so long that they could no longer perform the act individually, and

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the heterogeneous company of Mrs. Newell's friends, who presented, on the opposite side of the aisle, every variety of individual conviction in dress and conduct. Of the two groups the latter was decidedly the more interesting to Garnett, who observed that it comprised not only such recent acquisitions as the Woolsey Hubbards and the Baron, but also sundry more important figures which of late had faded to the verge of Mrs. Newell's horizon. Hermione's marriage had drawn them back, had once more made her mother a social entity, had in short already accomplished the object for which it had been planned and executed.

And as he looked about him Garnett saw that all the other actors in the show faded into insignificance beside the dominant figure of Mrs. Newell, became mere marionettes pulled hither and thither by the hidden wires of her intention. One and all they were there to serve her ends and accomplish her purpose: Schenkelderff and the Hubbards to pay for the show, the bride and bridegroom to seal and symbolize her social rehabilitation, Garnett himself as the humble instrument adjusting the different parts of the complicated machinery, and her husband, finally, as the last stake in her game, the last asset on which she could draw to rebuild her fallen fortunes. At the thought Garnett was filled with a deep disgust for what the scene signified, and for his own share in it. He had been her tool and dupe like the others; if he imagined that he was serving Hermione, it was for her mother's ends that he had worked. What right had he to sentimentalize a marriage founded on such base connivances, and how could he have imagined that in so doing he was acting a disinterested part?

While these thoughts were passing through his mind the ceremonial had already begun, and the principal personages in the drama were ranged before him in the row of crimson velvet chairs which fills the foreground of a Catholic marriage. Through the soft glow of lights and the perfumed haze about the altar, Garnett's eyes rested on the central figures of the group, and gradually the others disappeared from his view and his mind. After all, neither Mrs. Newell's schemes nor his own share in them could ever unsanctify Hermione's marriage. It was one more testimony to life's indefatigable renewals, to nature's secret of drawing fragrance from corruption; and as his eyes turned from the girl's illuminated presence to the resigned and stoical figure sunk in the adjoining chair, it occurred to him that he had perhaps worked better than he knew in placing them, if only for a moment, side by side.

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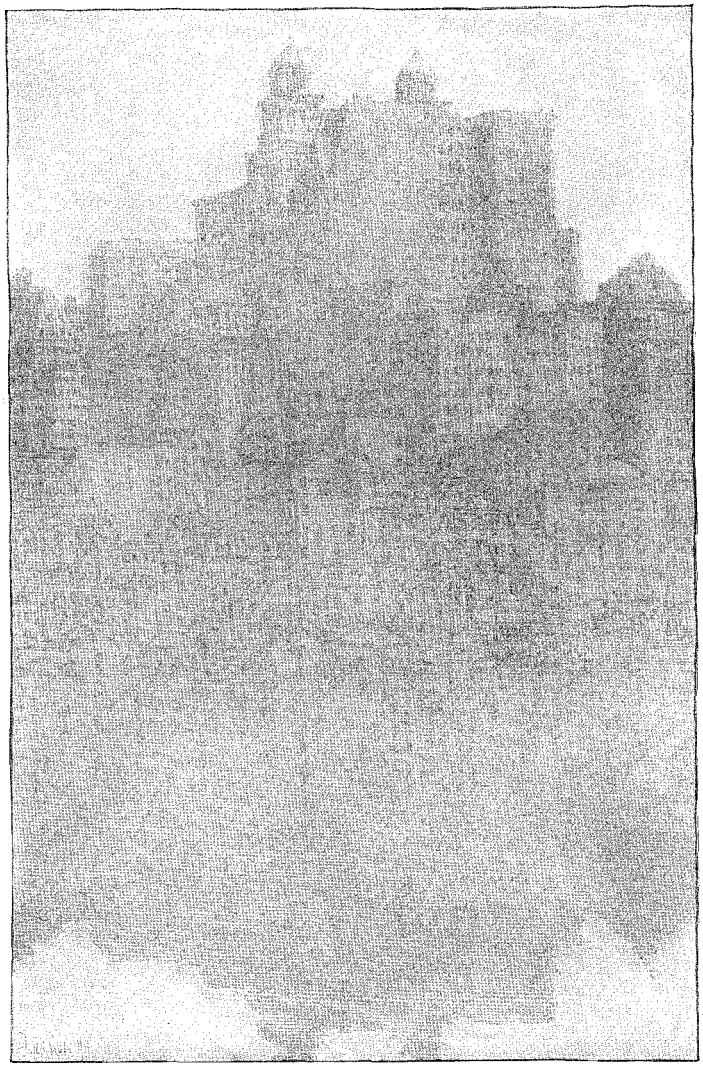

THE LOST CITY

By John Finley

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JULES GUÉRIN

BUT yesterday there stood a city here,
Impregnable; built on th' eternal rock
Which the unhistoried years had laid for it;
Reared of the substance of th' eternal hills
With earth's own iron sinews strengthening:
A city that had gathered to itself
Some shards of all the cities that have been
Since that eld son of him who bore the brand
The primal city raised in desert Nod,

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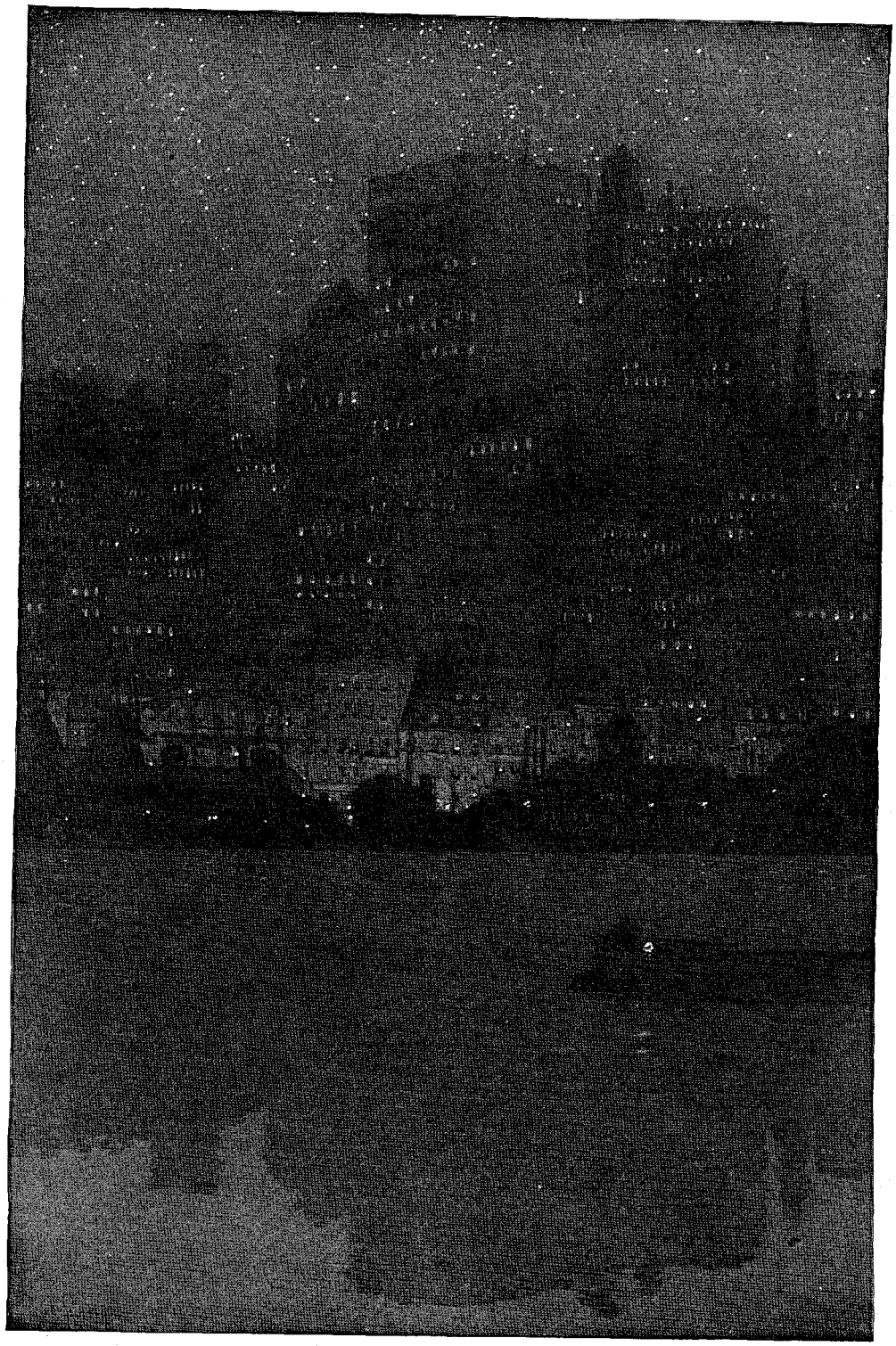

Drawn by Jules Guérin.

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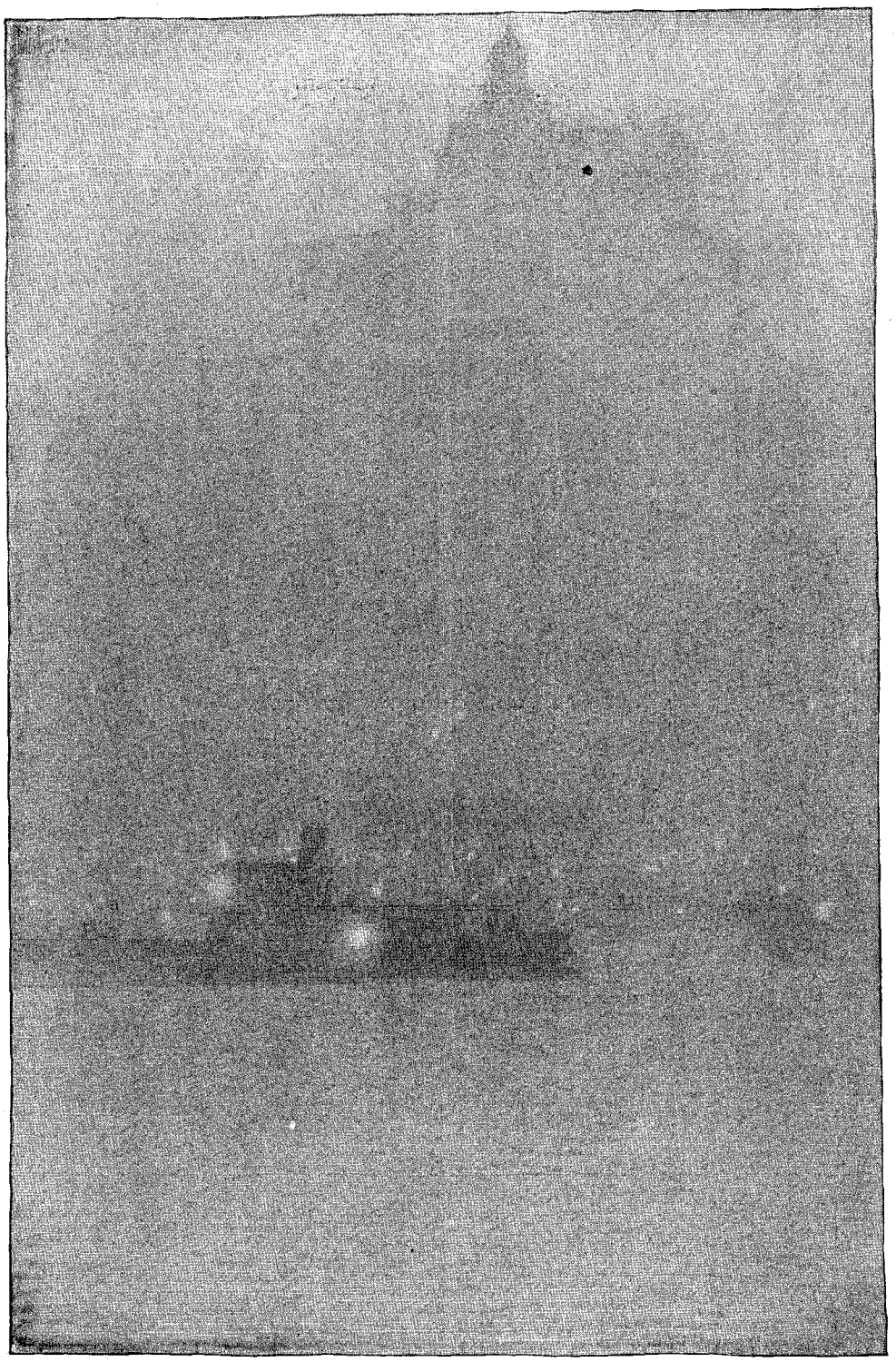

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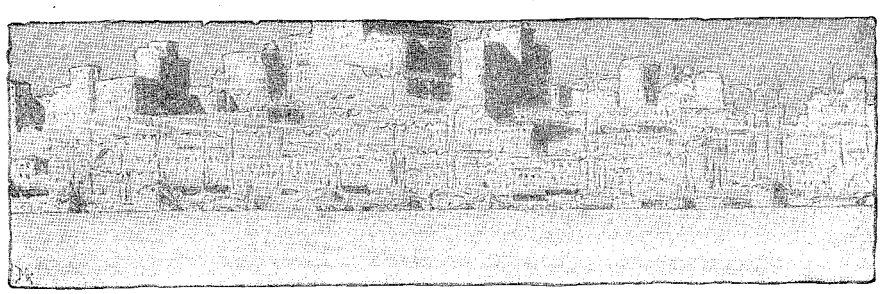
Shut in the shepherds from the fields and stars,
Set walls against their nomad wanderings,
And tamed their savagery to neighbor-laws.
Here towered it o'er the tide but yestermorn,
A mighty Taj with dome and minaret
Beneath the moon's last light; and yesternoon
I saw it shine resplendent in the sun,
Its brow unclouded, ears attent to catch
The whisperings of continents and seas,
Its eyes upon the wide horizon's rim
To count its argosies and caravans,
The while the shuttles sped through its dense streets
To keep the pulses of its eager heart.
And yesternight I saw its lanterns glow
From myriad windows framed in giant squares
Against the star-sprent sky, as if the earth
In some enthralling game were matching heav'n
For stakes of her dust-children's happiness.

. . . . . .

But this next morn no vestige shows of all
That yesterday so bravely built and hoped.
All, all is swept away as once proud Tyre,
Or swallowed up as Korah's rebel host,
Or buried o'er as Herculaneum;
All save some solitary peering tower,
That blackly looms from out the gray sea-smoke
Which has consumed the earth to void again
As 'twas ere He had breathed upon the deep.
The great gaunt ships, that carried yesterday
Their empire colors proudly into port,
Are shadows now in leash of other shades
Most sombre sitting at the water's edge,
Their mast-trees stripped by fog of yard and sail—
A spectre forest burned of leaf and bough.
Across the bit of firmament that's left—
A rood of pallid sea with sky of mist—
Huge, shadowy monsters creep like sightless moles
'Twixt two unseens. All else is vanished.
And from the void there comes no voice, save one—
The dismal tolling of the fog's lone bell,
Crying upon the water's waste, to tell
Where yesterday the living city stood.



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MISS GOODWIN'S INHERITANCE

By Thomas Nelson Page

I

WHEN my cousin asked me one evening in the middle of winter to go with her the following week to look at a "summer place" for her on the Maine coast, it crossed my mind for a moment that she was slightly mad; but the glance that I gave her as she sat in her rocking-chair, just out of the tempered light of the reading-lamp, with her dainty gray skirts spread about her and the firelight flickering on her calm features and white hands as she plied her needlework, showed nothing to warrant my suspicion. Only the time was midwinter, the hour was nine o'clock in the evening, and even the tight windows and the heavy silken curtains drawn close could not shut out the sound of the driving sleet that had been falling all the evening.

I knew my cousin well; knew that notwithstanding her Quaker blood and quiet ways she was, as an old neighbor had long since aptly said of her, "a woman of her own head," and that she had during her married life enjoyed the full confidence of her husband, her senior by some years, and one of the strong members of the bar, and had always borne with notable success her full share of the exactions of a large establishment and a distinguished position; I knew further, that since her husband's death she had ably carried on his charitable work and maintained her position as one of the leaders, not of society, but of everything else that was good and lofty and dignified. So I put aside the thought that first sprang into my mind and declared my readiness to go with her anywhere and at any time that she might wish.

"But why on earth do you select that particular spot and this particular time to look at a country place?" I demanded.

The question evidently appeared apt to her, and she gave one of her little chuckles of pleasure which had just enough of the silvery sound to prove it a laugh. Folding her hands for a moment in a way which she had either inherited from the portrait of her Quakeress grandmother, on her dining-room wall, or which she had learned by practice to make so perfect that it was the exact representation of that somewhat supercilious but elegant old dame's easy attitude, she said:

"For the best reason in the world, my dear John! Simply—*because*."

This ended it for the moment, but a little later, having, as I suppose, enjoyed my mystification sufficiently, she began to give her reasons. In the first place, she was "completely worn out" with the exactions of the social life which she had found gathering about her more and more closely.

"I feel so tired all the time—so dissatisfied," she said, with a certain lassitude quite unusual with her. "I cannot stand the drain of this life any longer. My heart——"

"Your heart! Well, your heart is all right—that I will swear," I interjected.

"Don't be frivolous. My heart is my trouble at present." She gave a nod of mock severity. "I consulted a doctor and he told me to go to some European watering place ending in 'heim,' but I know better than that. It is 'heim' that I want, but it is an American 'heim,' and I am going to find it on this side the water. Like that Shunamitish woman, 'I dwell among mine own people.'"

"What is the matter with this 'heim'?" I gazed about the luxurious apartment where Taste had been handmaid to Wealth in every appointment.

She shook her head wearily.

"I am so tired of this strenuous life that I feel that if I do not get out of it and go back to something that is calm and natural I shall die. It is all so hollow and unreal. Why, we are all trying to do the same thing and all trying to think the same thing, or, at least, say the same thing. We do not think at all. Scores of women come pouring into my house on my days and pour out again, content only to say they

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have left cards on my table, and then if I do not leave cards on their tables they all think I am rude and put on airs because I live in a big house. Forty women called here to-day, and thirty-nine of them said precisely the same thing. I must get out of it."

"What was it?"

"*Nothing*." Her face lit up with the smile which always made her look so charming, and of which some one had once said: "Mrs. Davison is not a pretty woman, but her smile is an enchantment."

"And what did you say to them?"

"I gave them the exact equivalent—*nothing*. I must get out. My husband once said that the most dreadful thing on earth was a worldly old woman."

"You are neither worldly nor old," I protested.

She gazed at me calmly.

"I am getting to be both. I am past forty, and when a woman is past forty she is dependent on two things—her goodness and her intellect. I have lost the one and am in danger of losing the other. I want to go where I can preserve the few remnants I have left. And now," she added, with a sudden return of her vivacity, which was always like a flash of April sunlight even when the clouds were lowest, "I have sent for you this evening to show you the highest proof of my confidence. I wish to ask your advice, and I want you to give the best you have. But I do not want you to think I am going to take it, for I am not."

"Well, that is frank at any rate," I said. "We shall, at least, start fair and not be by the way of being deceived."

"Yes, I want it; it will help me to—clarify my ideas—to arrive at my own conclusions. I shall know better what I do *not* want."

She gazed at me serene from under her long eyelashes.

"Flattering, at least! How many houses do you suppose I build on those terms? And now one question before I agree. Why do you want to take a place which is, so to speak, nowhere—that is, as you tell me, several miles from anywhere?"

"Just for that reason—I want to get back to first principles, and I understand that the place I have in mind was one of the most beautiful old homes in all New England. It has trees on it that were celebrated a century ago, and a garden that is historical. Family-trees can be made easily enough; but only Omnipotence can make a real tree, and the first work of the Creator was to plant a garden."

"Oh! well, then, I give in. If there is a garden." For my cousin's love for flowers was a passion. Her name, Hortensia, was an inspiration or a prophecy. She could have made Aaron's rod bud.

"There is one other reason that I have not told you," she added, after a pause.

"There always is," I observed, half cynically, for I was not as pleased as I pretended with her flatly notifying me that my advice went for nothing.

"My grandfather and the owner of the old place used to be great friends, and my grandfather always said it was one of the loveliest spots on earth: 'a pleasant seat,' he called it. I think he had a little love affair there once with the daughter of the house. My grandmother was always rather scornful about it."

II

A WEEK later we landed about mid-day at the little station just outside of the village where my cousin, with her usual prevision, had arranged to have a two-horse sleigh meet us. Unfortunately, the day before a snow of two feet had added to the two feet which already lay on the ground, and the track outside of town had not been broken. The day, however, was one of those perfect winter days which come from time to time in New England when the atmosphere has been cleared, the winds, having done their work, have been laid, and Nature, having arrayed herself in immaculate garments, seems well content to rest and survey her work. The sunshine was like a jewel. The earth sparkled with a myriad myriads of diamonds.

The man to whom my cousin had written, Mr. Silas Freeman, was on the platform to meet us. A tall, lank person with a quiet face, a keen nose, and an indifferent manner. Bundled in a buffalo-robe coat he stood on the platform and gazed at us in a reposeful manner as we descended from the train. We passed him twice without his speaking to us, though his eyes were on us with mild and somewhat humorous curiosity. When, in response to my inquiries,

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the station agent had pointed him out, I walked up and asked if he were Mr. Freeman, he answered briefly: "I be. That's my name."

I introduced Mrs. Davison, and he extended his hand in its large fur glove indifferently, while a glance suddenly shot from his quiet eyes, keen, curious, and inspective. She instantly took up the running, and did so with such a knowledge of the conditions, such clearness and resolution, and withal with such tact, that Mr. Freeman's calm face changed from granite to something rather softer, and his eyes began to light up with an expression quite like interest.

"No, he hadn't brought the sleigh, 's he didn't know 's she'd come, seein' 's the weather w'z so unlikely."

"But didn't I write you I was coming?" demanded Mrs. Davison.

"Waal, yes. But you city folks sometimes writes more 'n you come."

Mrs. Davison cast her eye in my direction.

"You see there—he knows them." She turned back to Freeman. "But I am not one of the 'city folks.' I was brought up in the country."

Mr. Freeman blinked with something between incredulity and mild interest.

"Well, you'll know better next time," continued my cousin. "Now remember, the next time I write I am coming, if I do not, you look in the papers and see what I died of."

Whether it was the words or the laugh that went with them and changed them from a complaint to a jest, Mr. Freeman's solemnity relaxed, and he drawled, "All ri-ight."

"And now, can't we get the sleigh right away?" demanded Mrs. Davison.

"Guess so. But th' road beyond th' village ain't broken."

"Well, can't we break it?"

"Guess so."

"Well, let's try. I'm game for it."

"Aall ri-ight," with a little snap in his eye.

If, however, Mr. Silas Freeman did not show any curiosity as to our movements he was one of the few persons we saw who did not. The object of our coming was evidently known to the population at large, or such portion of it as we saw. They peered at us from the porches of the white houses under the big elms, or from the stoops of the stores where they stood bundled up in rough furs and comforters, and, turning as we passed, discussed us as if we were freaks of Nature.

As we drove along, plunging and creeping through the snow-drifts, Mr. Freeman began to unbend. "This road ain't broke, but somebody's been along here. Guess it's Miss Hewitt."

"Who is Miss Hewitt?"

"She's one o' Doct' Hewitt's girls—she's one of the good women—looks after them 's ain't got anybody else to look after 'em."

We crept around the hill toward the river.

"Ah! 'twas Miss Hewitt," observed the driver to himself. "She's been to dig out F'lissy." He was gazing down across the white field at a small "shackelty" old cabin which lay half buried in snow, with a few scraggy apple trees about it.

When at length, after a somewhat strenuous struggle through snow-drifts up to our horses' backs, we stood on the portico of the old mansion, though the snow was four feet deep I could not but admit that the original owner knew a "pleasant seat" when he saw it. Colonel Hamilton, when he established himself on that point overlooking the winding river and facing the south, plainly knew his business.

The remains of a terraced lawn sloped in gracious curves around the hill in front, where still stood some of the grand elms which, even a century before, had awakened the enthusiasm of the owner's visitor. Beyond, on one side, came down to the river's margin a forest of pines which some good fortune, in shape of a life-long litigation, had spared from the lumberman's axe, and which stood like an army guarding the old mansion and its demesnes, and screening them from the encroachments of modern, pushing life.

On the other side, the hill ran down again to the water's edge, the slope covered with apple trees which now stood waist deep in snow.

Behind, huddled close to the house, were a number of out-buildings in a state of advanced dilapidation, and yet behind these the hill rose nobly a straight slant of nearly half a mile, its crest, where once the avenue had wound, crowned with a fine row of elms and maples, a buttress and defence against

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the double storm of the north wind and the casual tourist.

Moreover, the original architect had known his business, or, at least, had known enough to give the owner excellent ideas, for the house was a perfect example of the Colonial architecture which seems to have blown across the country a century and a half ago like the breath of a classical spring, leaving in its path the traces of a classical genius which had its inspiration on the historic shores of the Ægean and the Mediterranean. From foundation to peaked roof with its balustrade, in form and proportion, through every detail of pillar and moulding and cornice, it was altogether charming and perfect.

I became suddenly aware that my cousin's eyes had been on my face for some time. She had been enjoying my surprise and delight.

"Well, what do you think of it?"

"It is charming—altogether charming."

"I thought you would like it."

"Like it! Why, it is a work of genius. That architect, whoever he was——"

"Helped to clarify the ideas of the owner."

"Helped to clarify! This is the work of a man of genius, I say."

"His name was Hamilton. He built it and owned it."

As we came out of the house and plunged around to the long-closed front door to take another look at the beautiful façade, my cousin gave an exclamation.

"Why, here is a rose, all wrapped up and protected." She was bending over it as if it had been a baby in its cradle, a new tone in her voice. "It is the only sign of care about the whole place. I wonder what kind it is?"

"I guess that's F'lissy Good'in's rose-bush," said Mr. Freeman, who had followed us in our tour of inspection, now with an inscrutable look of reserve, now with one of humorous indulgence.

"Who is F'lissy Goodwin?" asked Mrs. Davison, still bending over the twist of straw.

"She's one of 'em—she's the one as lives down the road a piece in that little old house under the hill you saw."

"Does anyone live in that house!"

"Waal, if you call it livin'. She stays there anyway. She wouldn't go to the new home—preferred to stay right here, and comes up and potters around—I al'ays heard she had a rose-bush."

"Oh! She has a new home? Why on earth doesn't she go there?" questioned Mrs. Davison.

The driver's eyes blinked. "Guess she didn't like the com'ny. That's what th' call the poor-house." His eyes blinked again, this time with satisfaction at my cousin's ignorance. "They might's well ha' let her stay on up here. She wa'nt flighty enough to do any harm, and she'd ha' taken as good care of the house as anyone. But they wouldn't." His tone expressed such entire acquiescence that Mrs. Davison asked, "Who would not?"

"Oh, them others. They had the right, and they wouldn't; so she's lived down there ever since I knew her. All the others 're dead now—she's sort o' 'the last leaf on the tree.'"

The quotation seemed suddenly to lift him up to a new level.

My cousin's face had grown softer and softer while he was speaking.

"Poor old thing! Could I help her?"

"Waal, I guess you could if you wanted to."

"I do. Couldn't you give her something for me?"

"I guess I could, but you'd better get somebody else to do it. She'd want to know where it come from, and I d'n' know 's she'd take it if she knew it come from you as is buyin' the place."

"Oh! I see. But you need not tell her it came from me. You might give it to her as from yourself?"

It was the one mistake she made. His face hardened.

"Waal, no, I couldn't do that."

My cousin saw her error and apologized. He said nothing, but he softened.

"Miss Hewitt might do it. She's the one as hunts 'em up and helps 'em."

"Well, then I will get her to do it for me. She will know how."

"She knows how to do a good many things," observed Mr. Freeman quietly.

III

After this I knew that nothing would keep my cousin from buying the place if she could get it, and so in truth it turned out. After some negotiating, in which

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every edge was made to cut by the sellers, the deal was closed and the Hamilton place with all its "improvements, easements, appurtenances and hereditaments," became hers and her heirs' forever. No child with a new toy was ever more delighted.

I received one evening an imperative message: "Pray come immediately," and on my arrival I knew at once that my cousin had gotten the place. Her eyes were dancing and all of her old spirit appeared to have come back. The flush of youth was on her cheeks. I found the big library table covered with photographs of the place and house, inside and out, and if there was a spot not covered by a photograph it held a book on gardening.

"Well, I have it."

"Or them," I observed quietly.

"Them?" with a puzzled look. "Never mind! I know it's an insult, though I do not know just how. Well, I have sent for you. I want——"

"My advice?"

"—You to carry out my ideas."

"How do you know I will?"

"Come, do not talk nonsense. Of course you will." She began to sketch her views rapidly and clearly in a way that showed a complete comprehension of the case.

"The house is to be done just this way. And the grounds are to be restored as they were. All these old buildings are to be removed." She was speaking with a photograph in her hand showing the decrepit stables—"these which are recent excrescences pulled down, this moved back to its old site under the hill down there—and here is to be the garden just where it was—and as it was. See, here is the description."

She took from the table a small volume bound in red, and opened it.

"Here is an old letter written by my grandfather a hundred years ago, giving his impressions of the place when he visited it:

"'Here I am in the province of Maine, where I arrived a few days ago, expecting to find myself in a foreign land. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that the place and the people are more like those among whom I was brought up in my youth than in any other part of New England which I have visited. Of course, I am speaking of its appearance in the summer, for this is July, and it might be early June. . . .'

"You don't want all this—he gives simply a description of the distinction in classes which he was surprised to find here—'many of the families having their coats of arms and other relics of the gentry-class.' Ah! here it is. Here is the description:

"'I was invited to Colonel H.'s and he sent down for me his barge manned by a half dozen sturdy fellows, just as might have been sent from Shirley or Rosewell or Brandon; and on my arrival I found the Colonel awaiting me on the great rock which dispenses with any need for a pier, except a float and a few wooden steps.

"'He has one of the pleasantest seats which I have found in all my travels—a house which, though not large, would have done justice to any place in Maryland or Virginia, and which possesses every mark of good taste and refinement. It fronts to the south and is bathed in sunlight the whole day long.

"'The garden immediately caught my attention, and I think I might say I never saw more beautiful flowers, which surprised me, for I had an idea that this region produced little besides rocks and Puritanical narrowness: of which more anon. The garden lies at the back of the house, beginning on a level, with formal borders and grass-walks where the turf is kept as beautiful as any that I ever saw in England, and where there is every variety of flower which Adam and Eve could have known in their garden. In the first place, roses—roses—roses! Then all the rest: Rush-leaved daffodils, the jonquilles—"narcissi," the Colonel's sister calls them; phlox of every hue; hollyhocks, peonies, gillies—almost all that you have. Then the shrubbery!—lilacs, syringas, meadowsweet, spiræa, and I do not know how many more. I could not get over the feeling that they had all been brought from home. Indeed, I saw a fat robin sitting in a lilac bush that I am sure I saw at home two months ago, and when I bowed to him he nodded to me, so I know he is the same. On the land-side the garden slopes away suddenly into an untilled stretch of field where the wild flowers grow in unrivalled profusion. This the Colonel's sister calls her "wild garden." A field of daisies looked as if it were covered

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with snow. An old fellow with a face wrinkled and very like a winter apple, told me that one "Sir William Pepperil brought them over, and that is the reason you don't find 'em anywhere else but here." I did not tell him of my friend the robin.

"'By the way, the Colonel's sister is a very charming young lady—dark hair, gray eyes with black lashes, a mouth which I think her best feature, and a demure air. She is so fond of her garden that I call her "Hortensia".'"

"What's that?"

My cousin broke into a silvery laugh. "You know now where I got my name. But I don't think my grandmother ever quite forgave her."

She closed the book.

"Now, you see what I want—to restore it exactly as it was, and only to add what will carry out this idea."

"Are you going to have a gardener?"

"Of course——"

"A landscape gardener?"

"Yes, of course! And a man to furnish the house by contract—and another to get my pictures for me!" Her nose was turned up, and she was chopping out her words at me.

"Well, you need not be so insulted."

"I told you I wanted to *restore* it."

"I only wanted to know how much in earnest you are."

"Well, you put one new thing in that house, not in keeping with the idea I have, and you will know."

IV

With the first opening of spring my cousin was at work on her "restoration." She had the good sense to select as her head workman—for she would have no contractor either in or out of the house—a local carpenter—an excellent man. But even with this foresight it must be said that her effort at restoration was not received with entire approbation by her new neighbors. The gossip that was brought to her—and there was no little of it—informed her that they considered her incoming as an intrusion, and regarded her with some suspicion and a little disdain. Some of them set out evidently to make it very clear to her that they did not propose to let her interfere in any way with their habits and customs. They were "as good as she was," and they meant her to know it.

In time, however, as she pushed on with her work, always good-natured and always determined, she began to make her way with them. Silas Freeman stood her in good stead, for he became her fast friend.

"She is rather citified," he agreed, "but she can't help that, and she beant a bit airified."

I was present on an occasion when one of the first evidences of her gradual breaking into the charmed circle came. The work on the house was progressing rapidly. Rotted pediments, broken window frames, unsound cornices, lost spindles, being replaced by their exact counterparts; each bit that needed renewal or repair being restored with absolute fidelity under her keen eyes. And all the time she was rummaging around through the country picking up old furniture and articles that dated back and belonged to the time when her grandfather had visited the place. No child ever enjoyed fitting up a baby-house more keenly than she enjoyed fitting up this.

It was really beginning to show the effect of her tact and zeal. She had actually gotten two or three rooms finished and furnished, and had moved in, "'the better to see, my dear,'" she said to me. "Besides, I know very well that the only way to get workmen out of a house is to live them out. I mean to spend this summer here."

Outside, too, the work was progressing favorably, though the frost was scarcely out of the ground. The rickety buildings were all removed from her cherished ground "where once the garden smiled," and she was only awaiting a favorable season to lay out her garden and put in her seeds and slips, which were already being gotten ready.

It was one of those Sunday afternoons in April when Spring announces that she has come to pay you a visit, and leaves her visiting card in bluebirds and dandelions. The bluebirds had been glancing about the lawn all day, making dashes of vivid color against the spruces, and even a few robins had been flitting around, surveying the land and spying out choice places. Dandelions were beginning to gleam in favored spots, and a few green tufts were peeping up where jonquils had, through all discourage-

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ments, lived to shake their golden trumpets in sheltered places.

My cousin had enjoyed it all unspeakably. She had moved all day like one in a trance, with softened eyes and gentle voice. Before going to church she had, with her own hands, unwrapped the rose-bush she had observed on her first visit, and I heard her bemoaning its poor starved condition. "Poor thing—you are the only real old occupant," I heard her murmur. "You shall have new soil and I hope you will live."

V

THE afternoon had been perfect and the sun had just stolen across toward the top of the western hill and was sending his light across the yard, tinging the twigs of the apple trees with a faint flush of pink, and we were watching the lengthening shadows when I became aware that there was someone standing in the old disused road just outside the yard. She was an old woman, and there was something so calm about her that she seemed herself almost like one of the shadows. She was dressed in the plainest way: an old black dress, now faded to a dim brown, a cape of antique design and appearance, in which a faint green under the arms alone showed that it, too, had once been black, a little old bonnet over her thin gray hair, which was smoothed down over her ears in a style of forty years before.

"There is someone," I said in a low tone. "Isn't she quaint?"

My cousin, seeing that she was a poor woman, moved down the slope toward her.

"Good afternoon," she said gently.

"Afternoon"—with a little shift of her position which reminded me of a courtesy. "Air you Miss Davison?"

"Yes, I am Mrs. Davison."

"The one 't bought the place?"

"Yes, I am that one. Can I do anything for you?" The tone of her voice was so kind that the old woman seemed to gain a little courage.

"Well, I thought I'd come up and see you a moment this Sabbath afternoon."

"Won't you come up and see the sunset?"

"Well, thank you—perhaps I will, if it will not discompose you."

My cousin smiled at her quaint speech. As she came up the slope I saw her small, sunken eyes sweep the grounds before her and then rest on the rose-bush which my cousin had unwrapped that day.

"It is so beautiful from this terrace," pursued my cousin.

"Yes, it is," said the visitor. She stood and gazed at the sky a moment, then glanced half furtively at the house and about the grounds, and again her eyes rested on the rose-bush. Her faded weather-beaten face had grown soft.

"I have seen it very often from this spot. I used to live here."

"You did! Well, won't you walk into the house and take a cup of tea? I had just ordered tea for my cousin and myself."

The visitor gave me a somewhat searching look. "Well, perhaps I will, thank you." As she followed my cousin in she crossed over to the side of the walk where the rose-bush was, and her wrinkled and knotted old hand casually touched it as she passed.

My cousin went off to see about the tea, and I was left with our visitor. She was pitifully shabby and worn-looking as she sat there, with shrunken shoulders and wrinkled face beaten by every storm of adversity, and yet there was something still in the gray eyes and thin, close-shut lips of the unconquerable courage with which she had faced defeat. She was too dazed to say much, but her eyes wandered in a vague way from one point to another, taking in every detail of the repair and restoration. The only thing she said was, "My!—My!" under her breath.

When my cousin returned and took her seat at the little tea-table with its silver service, the old lady simply sat passive and dazed, and to the polite questions of the former she answered rather at random.

Yes, she was a girl when she lived there. Her grandfather had left her the right to use one of the upstairs rooms, but "they" would not let her have it. They did not like her to come on the place, so she didn't come much.

"My! wasn't the tea good—so sweet and warmin'?"

Every now and then she became *distraite* and vague. She appeared to have something on her mind or to be embarrassed by my presence, so I rose and strolled over to a window, and from there over toward the

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door. As I passed I heard her state timidly the object of her visit.

"I heard as you were a-goin' to dig up everything and set out fresh ones, so I came to ask you, if you had no particular use for it and were goin' to dig it up anyway, if you wouldn't let me have that old rose-bush by the walk. I'd like to take it up and carry it up to the graveyard——"

"Of course, you may have it——"

"You see, that's the only thing I ever owned!" pursued the visitor.

I saw my cousin give a deep and sudden intake of her breath, and turn her head away, and after a grab at her skirt her hand went up to her face. The old woman went on quietly:

"I thought I'd write to you, and ask you about it; but then I didn't—. It wasn't just convenient."

"Of course, you—m——" My cousin could not get out the words. There was a second of silence and then with shameless and futile mendacity she declared that she had "such a bad cold." She rose and dashed out of the room, saying to me with a wave of her hand as she passed:

"Tell her, Yes."

When she returned to the room she had a fresh handkerchief in her hand and her eyes were still moist.

Before the old woman left, it was all arranged. The rose-bush was to be moved whenever Miss Goodwin wished it; but meantime, as the best season for moving it had not come, my cousin was to take care of it for Miss Goodwin, and Miss Goodwin herself was to come up and look after it whenever she wished, and was certainly to come once a week.

"Well, I am sure I am very much obliged to you," said the old woman, who suddenly appeared much inspirited. "I never would have ventured to do it if I hadn't heard you were going to dig up everything anyhow, and I wouldn't have asked *them* in any case, not if they had lived till Judgment Day."

When Miss Goodwin rose to go, my cousin suggested that we should walk down with her, and as we started out she handed me several parcels and I saw that she herself had as many more.

At the door of her dark little habitation Miss Goodwin showed some signs of nervousness. I think she was a little bit afraid we might insist on coming in. My cousin, however, relieved her.

"Here are a few little things—tea and coffee and sugar and—just a few little things. I thought they might taste a little better coming out of the old house, you know." She was speaking at the rate of two hundred words a minute.

"Well——"

When we were out of earshot I waited for her to begin, but she walked on in silence with her handkerchief doubled in her hand.

"Your cold seems pretty bad!" I said.

"Oh, don't!" she cried with a wail. "That poor little half-starved rose-bush!" she sobbed. "The only thing she ever owned! And she didn't even have a stamp to write and ask me not to throw it away! I wish I could give her the house."

"What would she do with it?"

"Make 'them' feel badly!" she cried with sudden vehemence.

VI

All that spring and summer my duties in the way of helping my cousin to "clarify her ideas" took me from time to time to Hamilton Place, and every week Miss Goodwin used to come to look after her "estate," as the rose-bush was now dubbed. Under the careful treatment of my cousin's gardener, watched over by my cousin's hawk eyes, the rose-bush appeared to have gotten a new lease of life, and under the belated sunshine of my cousin's friendliness and sympathy the faded mistress also quite blossomed out.

Every week she came in to tea, and my cousin, with her tact, drew her on to sit at the tea-table and pour tea.

The crowning event of her life was the house-warming that my cousin gave to the neighbors. They were all there, and possibly among them were some whom, as my cousin had said, she would have liked to make feel badly. Whatever the motive, my cousin invited Miss Goodwin to pour tea, and to her mind, not Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like her, in her new black dress with a real breastpin.

For some time she had been coming every day to help about things, but much of her time was spent in pothering about the rose-bush, watching two buds that were

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really beginning to give promise of becoming roses.

They "all knew now" that the rose-bush was hers, and she wanted "them to see that it had roses on it." They had said "it weren't of no account."

The day of the event she came early. The summer night had been kind. The buds were real roses. She spent much of the day looking at them. No matter what she was doing she went out every few minutes to look at them, and each time my cousin watched her secretly with delight.

Suddenly, toward afternoon, just when the guests were expected, I heard my cousin give a cry of anguish: "She is crazy! She is cutting them!" She rushed to the door to stop her. On the threshold she met Miss Goodwin. She was pale, but firm and a trifle triumphant.

"Oh! What have you done?" cried my cousin.

Miss Goodwin became a little shy.

"They are the only things I have, and I would have liked you to wear them if you had not been in black; so I thought I would put them in a vase for you."

"I will wear one and you shall wear the other," said my cousin, "and then I will press mine and keep it."

I shall never forget the expression on Miss Goodwin's face.

"Me?—My!—" with a deep intaking of her breath. "Why, I haven't worn a rose in fif-forty years!"

I have reason to think she understated it.

My cousin took one of the roses—the prettier of the two—and without a word pinned it on her.

When the guests arrived it was interesting to watch Miss Goodwin. At first she was all a-flutter. Her face was pale even through the weather-beaten tint of her faded cheek, and her eyes followed Mrs. Davison with mute appeal. But in a little space she recovered her self-possession; her head rose; her pallor gave way to something that was almost color, and she helped my cousin with what was quite an air.

My cousin could not have done a cleverer thing.

Silas Freeman expressed the general judgment. When he was bidding her good-by he said, with a kindly light in his eyes, "Weäll, I guess you was about right in that thing you said that time."

"What was that?"

"That you wa'n't altogether city folks."

A SONG OF MOTHERHOOD

By Martha Gilbert Dickinson

As my own mother used to comfort me—
  Kissing the tears away—
Holding me close—aye, all too close for sobs,
  I hold thee, little dear one, close to-day!

Calming my older pain, by stilling thine—
  As mothers only know—
My heart-break lost in thine, as hers in mine—
  Long ago, little dear one, long ago.

As thou in turn, a woman grown and wise—
  Shall kiss, as I kiss now,
Finding the sunrise ever in thy child,
  Even thou, little dear one, even thou!

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DAWN

By Katharine Holland Brown

ILLUSTRATIONS BY F. WALTER TAYLOR

"IS it that you would make a jest of me, M'sieu?"

Prosper's tone grew keenly plaintive. He swept the straits, ice-barred, flashing white in the blind November sunlight, with brown eloquent palms. "That one should desire to camp in midwinter upon the Great Bear, that isle désolé, to live in that cabin of logs, with the chinks so gran' that the snow shall sift in upon you like feathers, to feed upon these meats of tin, these horrors, to sit all day and behol' only the sun, the storm; to hear at night but the lament of these misérables, the pines——"

"I've told you my plans already. Come on." Benedict swung the heavy bag over his shoulder and tried the ice with an unsteady foot. It rang beneath his shuffling stamp like a floor of polished steel.

"But the air! It is of a chill to wither, M'sieu. And there remains no game, nothing but a partridge, a starved hare, perhaps. And the ice is as the crust of the world. It will freeze again while that you may chop one hole for the fishing. Moreover, consider! This solitude most horrible!"

"Hoist that roll of blankets, Prosper."

Prosper's shrug ran the gamut of perplexities, rebukes, afflictions. "And I am bind myself as guide to this maniac for the month!" he muttered wrathfully. "Qu' c'est imbécile!"

Benedict, already staggering ahead beneath his pack, heard and laughed out. Two fools together they were, of a surety. Then, at the sound of his own voice, he stopped, panic-stricken; he blinked about him fearfully; his grip slackened on the heavy pack. Supposing They had heard him! Supposing They had seen!

He looked behind. His pinched gray face, his big wavering body, even, seemed to shrink, to concentrate to a focus of dread, all staring listening nerves. But there was nothing to fear; only a white harbor town, winter-sealed, its frosted roofs a-glitter, smoke rising in thin amethystine curls from the red chimneys. Beyond, the pines reared their solemn ramparts; before it, far as dazzled eye might follow, blazed the lake, ribbed in ice from rim to heart, a sea of glass and fire. A long cloud-rack drifted across the sun; dimmed like mist upon a shield, the lake fell violet, amber, rose, an answering heaven of radiances. Benedict shifted his pack; his dry lips relaxed. No wonder he was startled at his own laugh, he told himself apologetically, kicking back at the fears that hounded him. It was a good while since he had heard it. Up here he could laugh all he liked, thank the Lord. Up here he could breathe—he could let go!

He rubbed his hand against his head; it seemed as though the strap that had tightened across his temples all these months loosened a little. However, it would never slacken completely, they had told him. He trotted on, stumbling over the rough ice; he spoke their verdict over to himself again and again, stolidly, patiently, as though he would fit his slipping wits to the meter of the truth. "——out-door life—freedom from responsibility—no more close application—'Broken china, my dear Doctor! Broken china!'"

No more close application! Good God, what was life for?

He ground his teeth at the mockery of it: his heart sickened within him. Was it for this that he had spent himself, body and soul, on the science that was as the breath of his being? What if he had overworked? Men had overworked before, then doubled on their traces and dodged Retribution. But he had strung his powers to the breaking place for so long, so the physicians had explained, laboring to ease the blow. There were those five years in Leipsic, without a month of rest; there were the seven years in Bellevue, when he tramped the wards by day and slaved in his laboratory by night, and wrote at his book when he should have stopped for breath. Then came the ten years when he added a mounting snowball

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of private practice to his work as head surgeon of a great railway. That meant the strain of travel, of jarring light on eyes already taxed past endurance, responsibilities that dragged and rasped and harried. He had kept up, though, cool, taut-strung, unfailing, until that day—Ah-h! He had better not remember.

Yet he did remember. He watched with gruesome amusement as the scroll of his shame unrolled before him. He had watched it so many times, in beating agony, in dull endurance! He could afford to be calm, now. It was all over and done with.

He saw the wide amphitheatre, the ranks of students leaning silent, watchful, their notebooks shut, unheeded. The internes stood at his elbow, fresh as young priests in their blanched linen; the nurses waited silent on his word. Beneath his hand, for life or for death, lay the patient, a bearded Russian, gray-white under the ether; he himself was working at the broad, hairy throat, his fingers sliding with wizard lightness, his low voice checking off orders, unhurried, swift. He was completing the operation; he was tying the last tiny artery—Ugh! Where could that blue fog come from?

He brushed an impatient hand across his eyes. The room darkened slowly; probably a thunder-storm was coming up. He stooped to the patient; his fingers opened —shut—opened. What in the world possessed his hands that they would not grip? The blue haze shut in thicker, thicker; the patient's face was a wan blur.

He turned furiously to the nearest interne. "Turn on the electrics!" he said harshly. The man gaped back at him, a sick face of bewilderment. He spoke again: then he knew that from his lips came only a senseless gurgle. They were pushing close around him now, internes, nurses, all staring, white-lipped. From the galleries there rang down to him a great cry: horror, pity unutterable. And as he would have thrust them back in a rage of explanation, with lips that could not move, with hands that fell open, lax as the hands of the dying, his Night had closed down upon him.

He would be well again, they had promised him, when, after long months, he had learned to walk and to speak once more. Assuredly he was well again, he reflected whimsically. His muscles were ungoverned, his sight was dimmed, his hands shook without ceasing; but he could eat and sleep, and carry a pack of half his own weight. What more could a man ask? He had laughed in their faces when they had told him gently that he could never practice again: the memory of their stare at the note of his laughter made him cringe now. At any rate, he was not mad—not yet. However, it might be hard to convince them of that. They had been disgustingly obstinate about other things. So he had stolen away up here, his place of sanctuary on his one other vacation, ten years ago. Up here he could breathe—he could let go!

"Regard our palace!" sniffed Prosper, with a flourish. A log hut, banked to the sills in powdery snow, its tiny deep-set panes all gold-leaf in the westering light, stood close to the shore. Benedict answered faintly; Prosper glanced round, then dropped his pack and dragged the exhausted man up the beach and into the low door. Benedict yielded to his deft care with the stupid docility so hardly learned through these slow months of torturing dependence. Perhaps this had been the bitterest cup; he, always giver, to bow his head and receive!

Later, he lay in his bunk, lapped in the double luxury of warmth and silence, while Prosper flickered velvet-shod about the cabin. Within there shone no light save the deepening hearth-glow; through the port-hole window at his feet he looked out on the still winter world, hushed beneath the solemn magic of the frost. Away to the westward stretched the ice, a bleak gray sea, ridged in unmoving waves. Above a few stars twinkled, high and clear. And the blue of the far night sky was the blue of an arch of steel.

"I wonder if there are any home stars on this forsaken coast," muttered Benedict. This vast, impassive splendor chafed and daunted him. He stood an awed pygmy before this sovereignty of night and sea, unpitying, remote. "You, Prosper! Are there any other Arcadians loose on this isle désolé? Anybody that breathes, but the owls and the foxes?"

"Neighbors? Of a truth, yes, M'sieu. Regard to your left, on the shore of Sundered Island. Le voilà!"

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The spark of light across the dip of the bay glimmered so faint, it might have been but another star. But its gleam was the golden shine of a hearth, not the cold, white glitter of far suns.

"This is the cabin of the old McAlister, himself as is keeper of harbor lights for the Government. There lives he, even through the winter; also his son Angus, and Twonnet, the wife of his son. And with her now is Nanna Saugier;—half-breed, yes; but woman of years and of wisdom. Twonnet is possessed of neither, though she has of beauty enough and to spare. Ah, this is a fair blossom!"

"Do you mean to tell me there are women living on this God-forsaken place?"

"Assuredly, M'sieu. And the way of it is thus: The old McAlister has remaining to him but this one son, the beloved of his heart. Always has he kept the boy with him, here upon this solitude; always has he kept upon him the eye of a hawk, because of his great love, which fears ever that he may make some friend more dear to him than this father, who so adores him. Jealous? Of a jealousy which would blight, M'sieu; which would shrivel the new leaf upon the tree.

"But the boy has never had thought for another till the year gone, when he has first seen Twonnet—Twonnet Beaupré, she was then. And it is like he has walked in his sleep, all his life; with that first look, he is wake' up. Of a truth, he is h'innocent; he'll go to his father an' tell him all which he is come to feel.

"'I must have her for wife,' he'll say. 'She shall be to you daughter and beloved; and to both of us shall she take the place of the mother who is depart'.'

"Angry? Ah, but he has of wits, that old one, though he is of the Scotch blood, with the heart as hard as the fist. He has of wisdom to keep silence. The boy knows not the grief which he has given; he goes on, blind in his new joy.

"But his court prospers not. Twonnet loves him, perhaps; but she is all whim. Moreover, she has many suitors; she will not yield to his first prayer. Soon there come cruel words to him, strange sayings of this girl who he adores. Twonnet is orphan and alone; to her there float also all evil reports of the young Angus; and there is none to comfort her. There are long months when they both suffer; at last, like the white lightning, there comes upon them a knowing of the truth. It is his father, the old Angus, who has sowed these lies, that he may keep them apart.

"Bien, the young Angus has also of the strong will. It is upon the morning of the New Year that this word comes to him. Upon that night he has taken Twonnet, and they have crossed the ice hand in hand to St. Ignace. There the priest has made them man and wife. He has brought her back to his father in the first red of the day.

"'Behold my wife, she to whom you owe of love and of honor,' he has said. The old Angus gave him no word. Only he waited. And they tell it that the son's face grew white as Easter snows.

"'If that you will cherish her as your own, then am I still your son,' he has spoken on. 'Else we go now and live to you strangers. For we are one flesh. And even you, my father, shall not come between.'

"The old Angus—ah, he was brave! For love of his son he has curbed that fierce tongue, he has tried to do his part. Yet has he of harshness with Twonnet; and she—she may not forgive those words which she believes that he has spoken. Always she strives to lead her man away; always she plans to push father and son apart, to thrust herself between. It is a pity, not so? But c'est Twonnet. And beautiful? Even as the sky at dawn."

"But, Prosper!" Benedict turned impatiently on his bunk. The grim little story had roused him strangely from his wonted apathy. "You don't mean that the man spread those lies about his own son? Or that he slandered an orphan girl, even to keep his boy? It's preposterous!"

Prosper flung both slim palms outward, with a disclaiming shrug. "Who knows, M'sieu? I but tell the tale as it was brought to me. Of a truth, there are many minds upon this thing; and the word passes—M'sieu! Hark!"

Above the purr of the sinking fire they heard the creak of heavy footsteps on the snow. The steps paused outside; a hand fumbled at the latch.

"Prosper! The door!"

Prosper sprang to open it; but the stranger waited not upon courtesy. The

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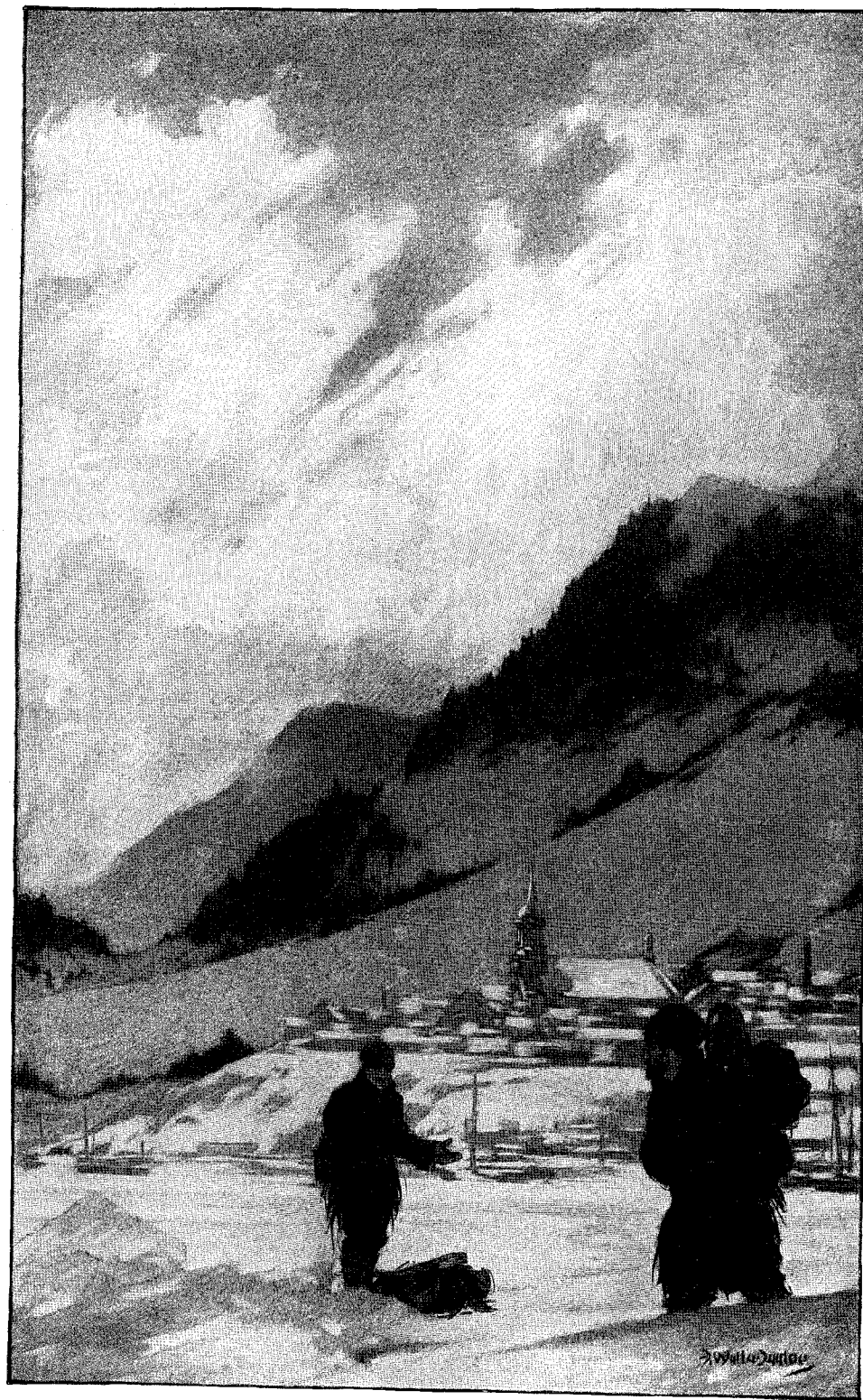

Drawn by F. Walter Taylor.

But there was nothing to fear; only a white harbor town.—Page 182.

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latch shrieked upward; the guest entered, bringing in a gust of icy air. He wasted no greeting on either of the men; he ducked his white head that it might not graze the beams, and stared about the room, tranquilly curious, superbly unabashed. His tremendous body, erect as an old fir in its worn bearskins, shouldered the little room till it seemed a cabin of Lilliput. By unerring instinct, Benedict knew him for the man whose name was still warm upon their lips.

Twonnet.

"Sit down and have a pipe with us," he ventured.

The stranger shook his head. "Na, but I'll be afther takin' my breath in the warm," he returned, dragging a stool to the hearth. The brogue was North Ireland: so were the eyes, blue as dark sea-pools under gray hooded brows. But the mouth was true Scotch, harsh-hewn granite.

"Ye're fixed fine an' easy here," he went on, after a long silence. "Ye're thinkin' to hunt, I'll warrant. But there'll be no game left on the Island. They're wise, the beasts. Here it do be on'y the mid of November, an' they're away to the Mainland for pasture, while yet the first freezin' is strong. They can smell the bitter winter. They'll be wiser than we, the beasts."

Prosper nipped a glowing coal in the tongs, and offered it to him. He lighted his pipe mechanically, then settled back in the warm stones of the chimney.

"Then it's to be a hard winter?"

"The fur'll be heavy as wool on the squirrels," he said shortly, after a taciturn pause. "There'll be the frost-writin' on the trees, too, shure. If ye know the woods, ye'll read the sign of a black Michaelmas on every bush an' twig."

Benedict laughed drowsily. This talk of the woods came to him like a lost strain of his boyhood. How many years could it be since he had tramped the Vermont hills in the glare of a freezing November sunset, his skates clinking on his shoulder, and had stopped to dig at the maple bark for a guess at the winter's length?

His eyelids fell in a sudden lethargy. Through its gray woof there flickered now and then a word from Prosper, a mutter from the woodsman; and he knew dimly that they spoke of him; yet he had no will to rebuke.

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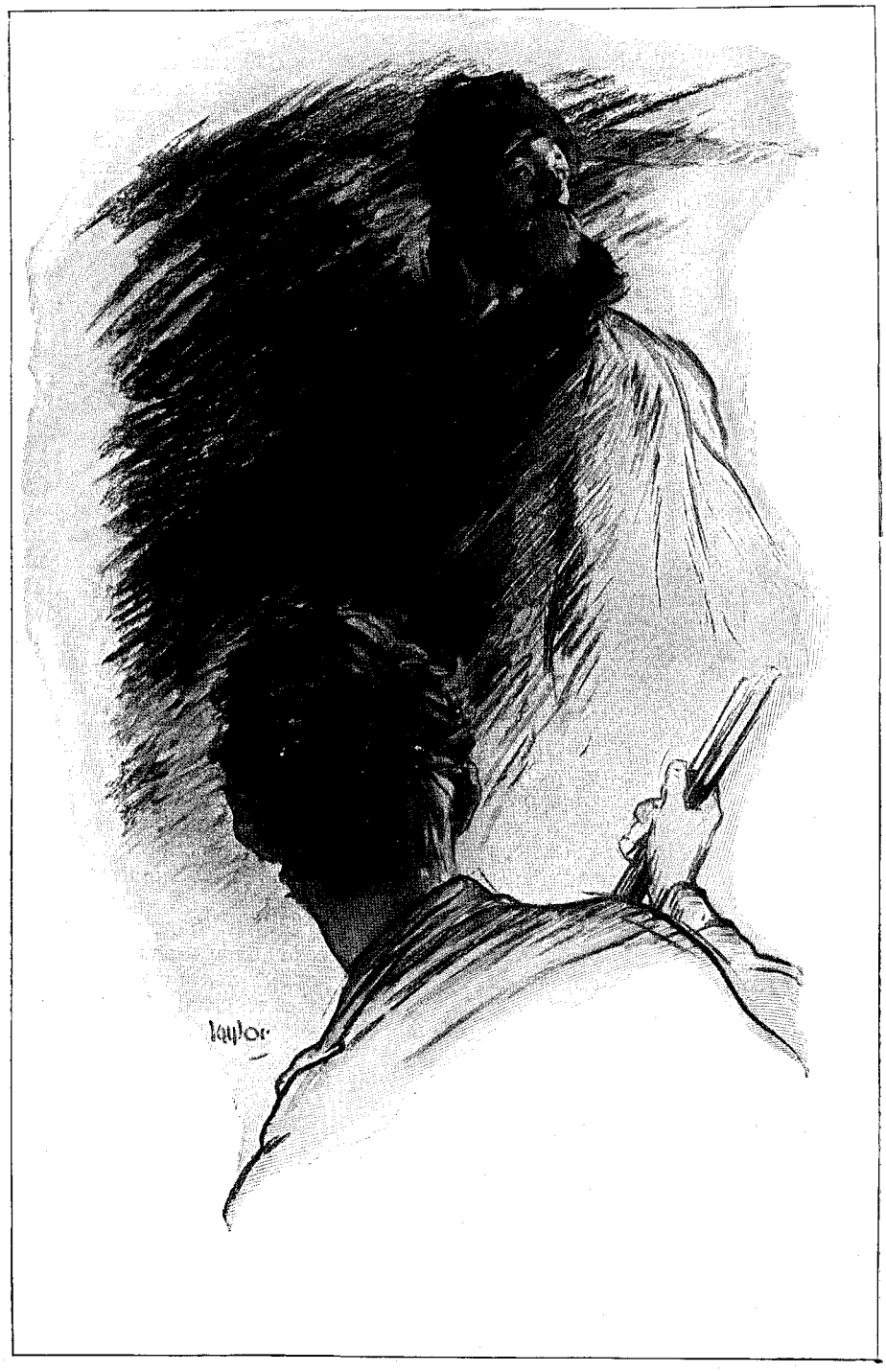

Drawn by F. Walter Taylor.

Benedict knew him for the man whose name was still warm upon their lips.—Page 186.

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Presently he felt himself slipping down into the sleep that he had learned to prize so dearly. He yielded with exquisite peace; yet his dulled brain heard and replied to old Angus's gruff parting word.

"So ye'll have been sick, thin! Sure ye've come to the quare place intirely to throw it off, man. But may the saints be good to ye, an' make ye whole!"

And in the deep rest that came to him, there seemed an earnest of the forester's hope.

The world was all adrift in rolling fog, thick as gray smoke, when he awoke again. Prosper bent over the fireplace; savory whiffs of bacon and boiling coffee eddied through the room. He slipped on his clothes and blundered out of doors, then halted on the step, gasping at the shock of the icy air.

"Get along, you coward!" he said savagely. He breathed deep, shuddering from head to foot; his shaken heart leaped and pounded at the strain. But he stumbled on through the creaking snow till he reached the sandy spit which jutted out toward Sundered Island.

As yet the fog loomed soft between a shifting ashen wall. But its dull waves lightened, paling from leaden gray to pearl, from pearl to silver. Faint rainbow iridescence gleamed through its melting billows; then, like a far trumpet-note, the thinning vapor flamed to luminous gold; and in another breath it quivered, faded, vanished, before the might of sunrise.

Now the Strait shone white as a floor of glass. Old Angus's cabin on Sundered Beach stood out sharp and clear. Through this thin, deceptive air the hut seemed within a stone's throw; yet, framed in its wreath of pines, it had the pictured quality of distance. Benedict looked at it indifferently. This long sleep had blunted the memory of the night before, till its story seemed woven in his dreams.

The cabin door opened; there came out the old Angus, then a tall lad, bundled like the father in bearskins, and carrying a light pack. They were starting on a day's lumbering, probably. Benedict watched them with sudden interest. How good it would be to tramp the scented woods, to swing an axe again——

Then he looked down at his flat, nerveless hands. He shut his teeth.

The door opened once more. The younger man looked back eagerly; the elder turned his back with elaborate indifference, and shaded his eyes to sight across the bay.

A girl, bare-headed, wrapped in a long red cloak that made a fiery stain against the snow, came down the rough steps. The boy glanced at his father, grim figure of scorn; then, with head bent, as in proud shame, he turned back to the girl and took her in his arms. The red cloak fell away as she put up her hands about his neck. Benedict could catch the sheen of the light on her bronze-gold braids, the white of her round arm. Without a sight of her face, he could vision the loveliness which the young husband stooped to caress. And the father stood his ground, silent, aloof, unseeing.

A great unreasoning pity caught his heart. The story was so clear! Husband and wife, linked in love and closest understanding, soon to be bound by even a dearer tie; and on the verge of their fair world the father, clinging miserably to the one power vouchsafed him in his stripped defeat: the power to give pain.

"As if there wasn't enough agony in the world without their pitching in to make some!" muttered Benedict. The boy had put her gently back, and turned to join the father. Perhaps his was the harsher grief, torn as he was between the two he loved. Yet Benedict's heart went out to the older man. For sorrow is doubly sorrow to him who faces it alone.

The days slid by with eerie swiftness, a conjuror's beads upon his woven cord of shine and gloom. There were the crystal days when lake and cloud, and even island and forest seemed built up of spun glass and glancing light, so fine, so clear, so fragile, that a breath might shatter. There were the dun days of menace, when the ice lay black beneath the heaving night of the sky, and the pines sighed like plumed mutes stooping above a bier. There were the white fog mornings, when the sunlight melted through films of rose and gold and milky violet, and to step from the cabin was to step into the heart of a vast opal. There were the hoar-frost mornings, with every twig a pearl.

To Benedict, their glory was a glory dimmed and faint. He had lived too long apart from Nature to yield at once to her spell. Yet there came times when the old charm of crying winds and murmuring

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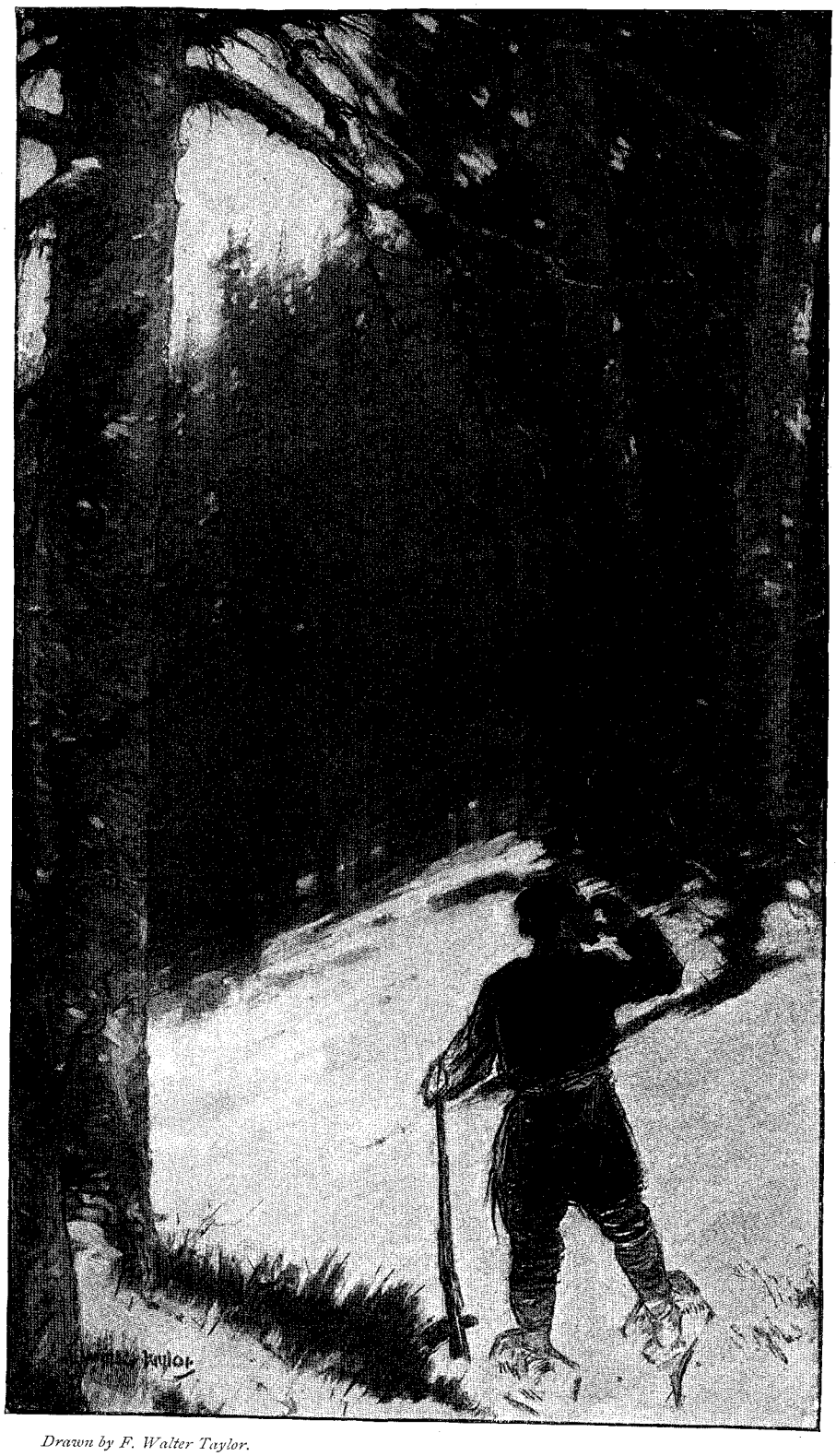

Drawn by F. Walter Taylor.

"The beast knew me for a quitter," he groaned.—Page 190.

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forest called aloud in his heart, and roused him, keen and trembling, from his torpor of despair. Then he would struggle out into the white silence, fighting his way inch by inch, hour by hour, against the weakness that dragged upon him like a poisoned cloak. Sometimes he fancied that he felt the pulses of faint returning strength in his numb limbs; more often Prosper, lurking at a safe distance, would appear at the opportune moment and help him home, too exhausted to protest.

Once he took a gun, determined to test eye and hand in marksmanship, incidentally to bring home a brace of rabbits for supper. But his step was heavy, and his wavering grip could not keep the barrel from clashing against the bushes. The game had ample warning; not a rabbit did he see. But as he dragged painfully up a shelving beach, he caught a glimpse of a brown, sleek body, a splendid trailing brush, not forty feet away.

"A red fox—a dandy!" he gasped, bringing his rifle to bear. The beast stopped, eyed him coolly; he felt the gun jerk against his shoulder. Good Lord! was he such a nerveless weakling that he could not muster spirit enough to aim a gun?

The sights danced and glimmered before his eyes. He laid the piece down, took it up, laid it down again; his hands shook like the hands of palsied age. The fox looked at him, unflinching, a moment longer; then it turned and trotted deliberately away. Benedict clutched at the tightening cord about his head.

"The beast knew me for a quitter," he groaned, in helpless fury. There were red sparks in his dulled eyes; the sweat glittered about his twitching mouth. "If I can't rule this big whimpering whelp of a body, I'll sink it! I'll—oh, shut up, you fool, and drink it down!"

So he pushed on, clutching at every straw of hope, as a man who sinks in quicksands clutches even the frail reeds upon the bank. But there came hours when even his royal courage crouched before despair. Perhaps the struggle would have been less bitter had there been one to whom he could cry out his agony. But there was none to hear. He sat alone before the ashes of his days.

. . . . . .

"Also to-night will be the ball of the eve of Christmas at St. Ignace, M'sieu. Is it not that you would wish to attend? I am free to bring one guest. You may not have of choice to dance, but it will be a thing magnificent to see."

Benedict smiled at the transparent hint. "Certainly you can go, Prosper. You needn't come back till after Christmas. I'll get along all right."

Curled and scented and stunning, Prosper stalked away, pouring forth vows of eternal gratitude. Benedict cooked his own supper and washed the dishes, clumsily enough, yet with a quaint pride in being able to accomplish this primitive duty. Then he took a book and settled down for a quiet evening. But the time dragged. Prosper's chatter was tedious enough; but even tedious things have their ballast of compensation.

Presently warmth and silence had their will. The book slid from his hands; he drifted comfortably into the doze which came nowadays, instead of the torpor of the months past. Yet he slept soundly, for shouts and blows on the heavy door did not arouse him. Not till old Angus burst the latch from its casing and hurled himself into the room did he awaken.

"In God's name, man, have ye no ears? Come!"

Old Angus's grip shut fiercely on his shoulder. The terror in the old man's voice startled him more than the rough summons.

"What's up, McAlister? Anything happened?"

"'Anything happened?'" McAlister's voice rose in a shriek. He stood trembling from head to foot; he snatched at Benedict's hands with an anguished gesture. "Happened, is it? Here's me boy, gone to the Mainland the mornin' for to get a bit Christmas for Twonnet. He'll be back to-morra, he says, for the big cracks make it dangersome, crossin' the Strait by night. To-night Nanna must fall on the steps, an' scream for the scare of it. She'll not be hurted, but the noise an' the cry has frighted Twonnet, an'—Man, her Hour is come! Ye're a docther; go back to her, whiles I find my son. For if she slips away whiles he is from her, there'll be no livin' left for him—nor me."

"I'll go to the Mainland with you," said Benedict, hoarsely. "We'll bring a doctor from there. Nonsense, I can't take a case

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Prosper.

like that. Good Lord, man, you don't know what you're asking! Look here." He thrust his twitching hands before the other's face. "I'm sick, I tell you. I wouldn't risk it for the world. What if I killed her? It's no more than likely. Let me alone, I say. I won't. I can't!"

"Ye've got to go!" the old voice shrilled out, frantic. "Bring a Mainland doctor? The breath will be gone from her by midnight, man. I'm all that's left to care for her, an' now she'll die on my hands—me, what's grieved and thwarted her all her days. But niver did I say the word that was brought to her. Niver! I'm a hard man, but God forbid that I speak one lyin' word again' a helpless woman, though she's stole the heart of me life. But she'd niver believe but that I'd spoke it. An' my brute pride wouldna let me tell her the truth. She's come a'tween me an' my son"—his voice broke in a great sob—"but I'd give him up to her, body an' soul, if I could forget the harsh words

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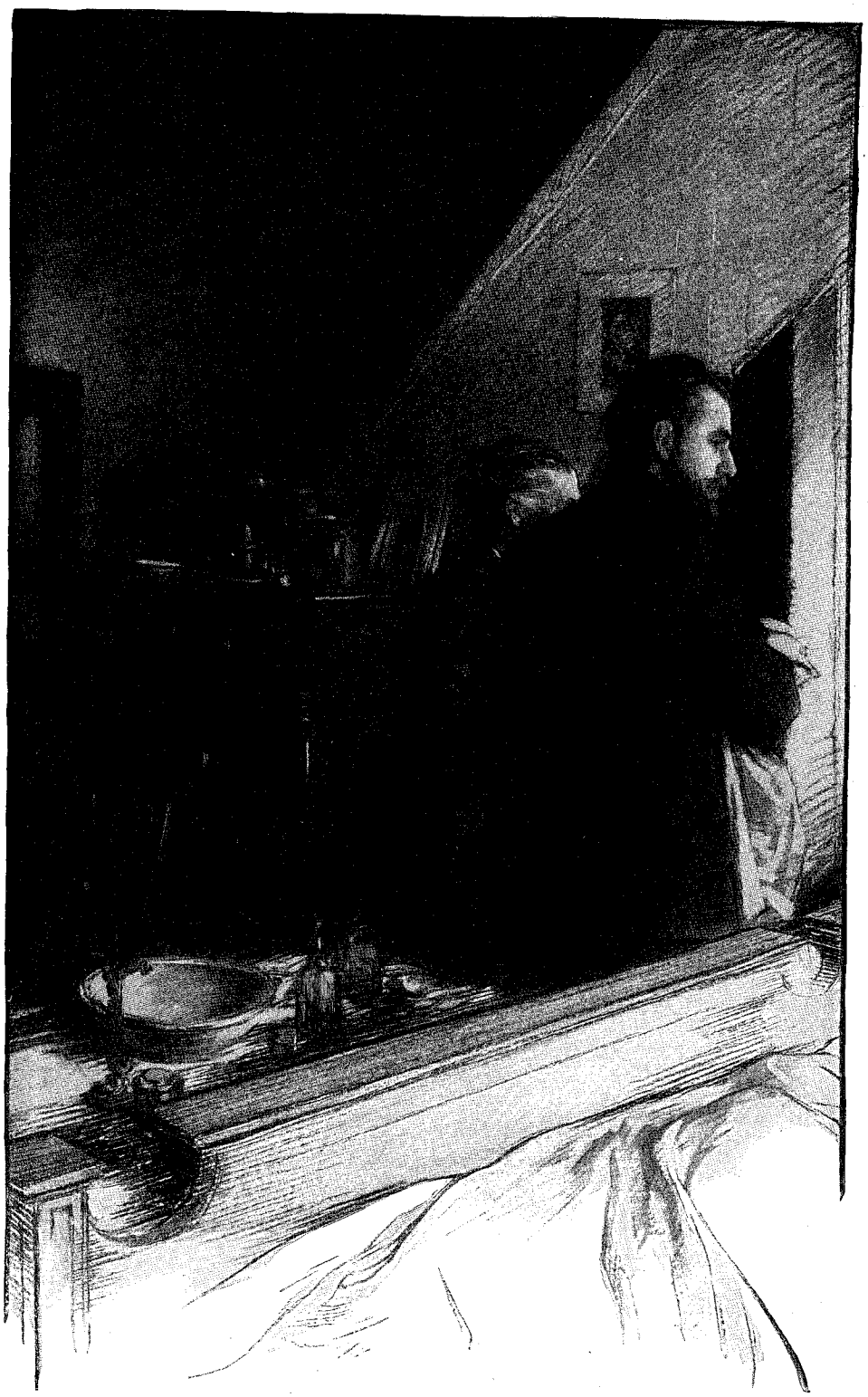

Drawn by F. Walter Taylor.

In the gray of the Christmas morning, he knew himself conqueror.—Page 193.

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I've spoke her, an' she in the face of her Time. An' oh, the brave heart of her! The brave heart of her!"

They stumbled on across the ridged ice, gripping each other mechanically. Benedict's heart pounded and quivered; but for the old man's grasp, he would have pitched over again and again.

"We don't need to stop here!" he gasped as they reached McAlister's cabin. "Let's go on. We haven't a minute to spare."

"*Ye* haven't a minute to spare, ye mean," said the old man, roughly. "Hush, now!" For Benedict, frenzied at his unspoken demand, was praying and commanding in a breath. "Ye'll go to her an' ye'll do yir best. No human being can do more. Man!" The furious protests died on Benedict's lips at that note of agony. "Her life lies in yir hands now. An' my soul goes out if ye lose it!"

He thrust Benedict inside the door and plunged away. The ring of his footsteps on the ice echoed a moment, then was gone.

Benedict stood staring at the fire. The room eddied and swam in darkling circles. He reeled on the brink of panic. The horror of his impotence, the shame of his collapse, swept over him in drowning waves. The old man's cry beat in shrieking echoes upon his brain:

"Her life—in your hands—And my soul!"

All at once his frantic terror subsided; he lashed his staggering wits into line with the whip of merciless will. "It's no good trying to bolt," he found himself saying, very quietly, as though he strove to hearten another. "There's no way out. Either you pull up—or they lose her. You're up against it. Go on. Keep your whip-handle. You're half blind, that's a fact. And your hands are no good. And your nerve's gone. But you're up against it. Go on. Go on!"

Through the black hour that followed, the words swung like a steadying weight within his brain. But soon they melted from his thought, forgotten. And thus he forgot all things, save this task that he must do.

He was no longer racked with pity for the old man in his horror of remorse. He had no thought for the poor young husband stumbling on through the darkness, and clutching to his breast the pitiful little gift which his love might never see. He was a machine once more, splendid, unerring, pitiless. Old Nanna, still dazed by her fall, yet wise in her obedience, stood to his quiet orders; and side by side, through the endless night, together they fought with Death.

In the gray of the Christmas morning, he knew himself conqueror. He laid the baby in her arms, and smiled back at her pale delight. Then he slipped from the cabin to the wide, dark silence. The lake was a black shield; the stars hung poised and trembling, mysteriously bright, on a high auroral sky.

Up the beach crept two dusky figures, reeling, exhausted, hurrying, hurrying on. Benedict did not recognize them. He was not relaxed to the point where his thoughts could reach beyond that shadowed room. Yet when young Angus griped his arm, his face a wrung mask of dread, he answered him with swift reassurance:

"Everything's all right. Go in, but keep quiet. She's waiting for you."

Old Angus, haggard, shame-stricken, caught the low word. He sank on the bench outside the door; his rough head fell in the covert of his arms.

Benedict laid his hand lightly on his shoulder. "Brace up, McAlister. Can't you face good news? Besides, she'll be wanting you in a minute, too."

"Wantin' me!" The old man stood up; his hard face broke and quivered. "An' why should she be afther wantin' me, the man who has teased an' harrid her, who's grudged her her happiness——"

His voice trailed away into silence. For through the half-open door came a low summons. Twonnet's voice; no longer edged with taunt, sweet with the ineffable sweetness of her mother-joy.

"Is it that you will not come to behol' your gift of Christmas, this little Angus, mon père, mon ami?"

Benedict laughed out tenderly as the old man, struck to the heart, turned and blundered in. The sound recalled some vague harassing thought. A recollection?—a fantasy?

He pressed his hands against his head. What was that dream that had haunted him last night, many nights, of a knotted thong that bound him, ever tightening? For now he knew no pain; and his thoughts

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followed one upon another, marshalled, orderly. He picked a dry leaf from the oak near by and looked at it intently. The tracery of veins, the shadings fine as a moth's wing, were clear to his sight as though etched in steel. He walked a few rods; his steps rang clear and steady upon the frozen ground.

Then a great, quiet wonder came upon him. He stopped and looked down at his bare outstretched hands. And they were calm.

He turned to the low kindling East. A light wind sighed and drifted; softly the pines intoned their high rejoicing chant. He looked deep into the crystal of the miracle: his lost life, given back to him entire and perfect, its every noble power his to use once more. The craft of cunning hand; the majesty of sight; the supreme might of trained unshaken brain, strong, confident, unfailing. It was all his, this prince's inheritance. Ah, gift of gifts, the strength to toil once more!

And over the ramparts of the hills, hushed in the peace of victory, lifted the white oriflamme of the Day.

SUNDAY IN TOWN

By Caroline Duer

I

THE sun is misty yellow and the sky is hazy blue,
And the chime-bells ring out quaintly,
Near and deeply, fair and faintly,
Each one following its fellow in an echo clear and true.
Through the streets, clean-swept for leisure,
Many feet make haste toward pleasure,
And the sound is as the rustling of the leaves in paths we knew.
How I wish I were a-walking in the Autumn woods with you!

II

Oh, the fragrance of the hollows that the little brooks ran through!
Oh, the scarlet maples burning
Like a torch at every turning,
On the way my spirit follows in a dream forever new,—
Where from quiet, distant meadows,
Dim beneath the mountain shadows,
Came the clank of swinging cow-bells down the softest wind that blew.
Oh, I wish I were a-walking in the Autumn woods with you!

III

We have had our fill of roving where spring blossoms bound the view.
We have played in young Romances,
Danced the nymph-and-shepherd dances;
Now the Summer of our loving glows and throbs about us too.
In our eye the light yet vernal,
In our hearts the fire eternal,
And when time has touched the branches and our rose-leaf days are few,
Oh, it's then I'd still be walking in life's Autumn woods with you.

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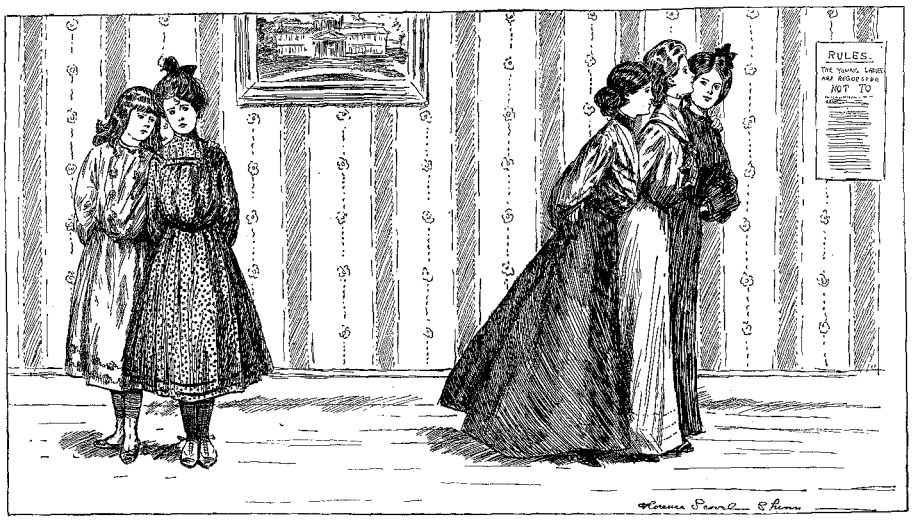

Of course those older girls won't have anything to do with us.—Page 196.

THE LEVITATION OF MISS WEEKS

By Josephine Daskam Bacon

ILLUSTRATIONS BY FLORENCE SCOVEL SHINN

I DON'T suppose you have the least idea what levitation means; unless you've ever done it, that is, and then you called it something else, most probably. Anyway, whatever you call it, it's a very strange thing, and stranger if you knew Weeksey. Ben says that if she lives to be an old woman of thirty or forty she shall never forget the sight of poor Weeksey's face as she sailed up in the air. Ben is writing an account of it herself in blank verse, which will probably be very famous, but I am to do it in prose, because poetry is seldom appreciated till after you're dead.

Still, I don't see how anyone could help but appreciate Ben's poetry. Some lines are very fine. Here is a bit about the discovery of the Society just as Miss Weeks was sent up, by that sneak of a Creepy-cat (her name is Katrina Kripsen, and she is supposed to teach the Swedish System):

> Oh, then indeed did Weeksey's eyes begin
> To roll, and still she held her breath in tight
> As she was bidden by the valiant band.
> Still up she went and up to-ward the blue.

Of course it was not blue, as it was the ceiling of the cloak-room, which is naturally whitewashed. But as Ben says, if you will look at any poem, you will see that there are a number of things like that in it, even the greatest.

> When softly opes the door a little bit,
> And more and more, alas for Weeksey poor!
> For who is this? Great God, the Creepy-cat!

If anyone thinks that Ben talks that way, they are much mistaken. Of course she wouldn't be allowed to. Why, in translations, you can't say what *mon Dieu* really is. You say "Indeed!" or "What, then!" or "Alas!" according to the sense. Although it seems very strange that if that is what they mean they don't say so, and not something else entirely.

I wanted Ben to say, "Alas, the Creepy-cat!" myself, but she got so awfully mad and talked so much about it that I saw it was no use. Ever since they sat on her composition where the boys came out of school and said "Bully for you," she has been very sensitive about those sort of things. Of course in one way she is perfectly all right—boys *do* say "Bully for you!" we all know that. But still it looks very queer for a girl to write to hand in to a teacher.

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So we all begged her to take it out, knowing what the Pie (in other words, Miss Appleby) would think. But, of course, if you know Ben you know how much good we did. That is, none at all.

She said she was writing as an author, not as a girl. So she left it in, because the Pie was a teacher of Literature and must know that an author doesn't necessarily do all the things the characters in his works do. For look at Shakespeare in that case, or Ouida. But of course it was pounced on, and the Pie wrote in red ink on the side, "Change this expression." Then Ben fought it out with her, and asked her what expression the boys would be likely to use, and she said that was not her concern, but she knew what expressions her pupils must not use. Which hadn't anything to do with it, of course; but what could you expect of the Pie? Ben argued it with her all the afternoon, trying to make her see that she wasn't responsible for the way boys talked, but the Pie said at last that she needn't select such subjects, and then Ben had her on the hip, as Shylock says, because the subject was given to us—The First Day of the New Term! Then the Pie got mad and said she had no more time to waste, and Ben got mad, too, and asked her for a list of expressions not allowed to be used by the Elmbank School, and she got a reprimand and had to practise all Wednesday afternoon, more or less.

But to our muttons, as they say in novels.

I don't suppose we should have had any Society at all if it hadn't been for Ben. Whoever does anything by themselves, she finds it out, and if it's worth anything she makes a society right away—she is usually president. We've had a good many, but they don't last especially long, because we begin to scrap very soon and then it splits up, and some of the girls keep splitting away from the first split, if you see what I mean. Eleanor Northrop says that Ben's societies are like the Protestant Reformation in that way—she is sixteen.

She was in one with us once, which is why she knew about them, for of course those older girls won't have anything to do with us usually. But she has an aunt who believes that King Charles is the rightful King of England to-day, and not Queen Victoria. If you believe that, you wear a white pink in the lapel of your coat, or pin it to your *guimpe* if you are a girl, unless you have tailor-suits like Pinky West, who can wear a flower like a man. I have given her one every Saturday for weeks.

Well, when Ben heard about this, she thought it would be a grand idea for a society, so she got one right up. There was all our crowd, and then Eleanor, of course, on account of her aunt. She thought she ought to be president, and I will say that if it hadn't been that Ben and I always go together, I might have agreed with her, both on account of her age and her aunt; but of course Ben wouldn't be in any society she couldn't be president of, as we explained to Eleanor. Eleanor thought she knew most about the thing, but when we came to talk it up, she found to her surprise that Ben knew a lot more! It was no surprise to me, because Ben always does know more, somehow. When the girls all tried to get her to tell how she found it out so soon, she just looked big and coughed that way she does—and it does make you awfully mad—and said everybody knew all about that, of course.

Just the same she didn't till she looked it up, because I caught her in the upstairs library sitting under the piano, scowling and mussing her hair the way she does, with a big book. I gave our private call, but she pretended not to hear; and if you keep on she gets mad and won't speak, and she persists afterward that she didn't hear a word! Ben is easy to get along with if you will pretend to believe what she wants at the time, but I see what the girls mean when they stop speaking with her about twice a week.

Polly-Cracker (in other words, Miss Luella McCracken Parrott) says that Ben has a tremendous temperament, but that is not so—plenty of the girls have a million times worse temper than Ben. It is queer that Polly should say that, too, for next to dear Miss Naldreth she is the kindest to her of all the teachers, and not because Ben does well for her either, for she teaches Mathematics, which Ben loathes and despises and can't do.

That society never amounted to much, because really when you got down to it there wasn't much to do but wear white things and listen to Ben read long ballads about Prince Charley. She reads too fast, anyway—we all like her own poetry better.

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But it did one thing: if it hadn't been for that we probably shouldn't have known anything about Gray Fairchild's voodoo, and that was the beginning of the most important society we ever had or shall have in Elmbank School. It was probably the most important society ever had in any school, for that matter. I don't believe you can show me many societies that have had professors from Harvard come to see them, and articles in German written about them!

She is supposed to teach the Swedish System.—Page 195.

Gray Fairchild is from Virginia. She joined the society, though not in our crowd, because her family is a very old one and was originally in favor of Prince Charley and not of Queen Victoria. She had an ancestress in ancient times who refused to marry George Washington, according to an old legend—he was not of high enough birth for her, though that seems very strange, as we always thought Washington was the highest possible person. But Gray says that not to be able to tell a lie has nothing to do with family greatness, though it may be very good in other ways. She also says that being a President of the United States isn't considered so dreadfully much in Virginia. There was an aunt or some relative of her mother's that got up from the table once when one of the Presidents was at dinner, because she said he had not been taught how to hold his fork!

Her family did not approve of the Revolutionary War, and they went to live in England during it, nor the Civil War either. Her grandmother is called Madam Fairchild, and once Gray was saucy to her and was not allowed to speak to her or come into the room where she was for a month.

She had never been in a society before and she was terribly proud of being elected a member of this one and of being treasurer, on account of her ancestors feeling just as the Society did about Queen Victoria. There was really little or nothing for a treasurer to do, but Ben always makes us have all the offices in her societies. Which is all right, of course, and pleases the girls when they are elected.

Well, one day we met in the laundry, and for once we didn't have to pretend, because it was really dangerous meeting there, as they have a fit if they know about it, and everyone had to wear black crape on their arms because it was the anniversary of something or other about the Pretender. There were two pretenders, and one is in "Kidnapped," but I get them all mixed up—I never really knew which one it was we believed was the rightful heir. Eleanor's aunt and Ben know, I suppose, but I doubt if even Eleanor does.

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Ben said that there ought to be some special ceremony to mark this day forever in our minds, and that we ought never to see a clothes-wringer again or those little balls of bluing without a sob rising in our throat—she got part of that out of some book. We hadn't had a very good initiation for this society because we'd used all the good ones we knew, and Ben felt that the girls weren't interested in keeping it secret, which is the main good of a society, of course. So she was specially anxious for some really big thing to do. And then it was that Gray Fairchild told us the great secret that afterward made us so famous, though only, alas! for a short while.

"Let's *raise 'em high!*" said she.

Of course nobody knew what that meant, and when Gray explained it to us, we didn't believe it. But Ben was delighted with the idea from the first; she always knows when there's anything in a thing, besides inventing the most interesting and remarkable things herself, as everybody admits—even the girls that can't bear her.

I have given her one every Saturday for weeks.—Page 196.

An old darky nurse that Gray and her sisters had, told them about it, and the secret charms for it and the best times to do it and all.

We have all given our solemn words of honor never to do it again, and not to tell it to the others, who certainly would, and would probably hurt themselves badly, not knowing the secret spells that we never can tell—not even to Miss Naldreth or the Professor or Dr. Welles, though they begged of us to do so; but we were firm and would have been so under any kind of torture, which was not done, I am happy to say.

But Gray's nurse told them, and she told us, the fate of those that break the oath that we all of us took, and I never took a worse, though Ben has given us some terrible ones. Some from books and some she composed herself and some mixed.

Still, we did not promise not to describe the history of it for future generations, which is quite different from telling the other girls.

If all the secret vows were secret like that, I can't see how they could ever have got into the histories, where the most private things, even that people thought, seem to be known. I suppose all secrets were told somebody for that purpose, so they could be preserved. Constantia says that God keeps them to reveal at his leisure, but her Sunday-school teacher told her that, and everybody knows it anyway. *From whom no secrets are hid*, it says in the Prayer-book, which is where her teacher got it, probably.

Ben says that perhaps God doesn't know the oath we took, on account of its being a voodoo oath, and his not caring to know about it, though of course he probably could if he chose. I think this is very reasonable myself, but Constantia got mad and left the Society, though Ben explained very clearly to her that she didn't mean anything disrespectful to God, but really rather flattered him by supposing that he would scorn to take any interest in voodoo. Moreover and particularly, as Dr. Belcher says, Ben proved it to Constantia from the Bible itself and from Tennyson; but Constantia is a little fool, and wouldn't come back to the Society, and wrote to her uncle about it, and it was that letter that started the teachers following us up.

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Pass we now, as it says in "Griffith Gaunt," to the chief part of this history, namely, the secret rites of the Elmbank School Voodoo Society.

You lay the person on the floor that you are going to initiate, and they say certain words and hold their breath. Then four others, usually the president, the vice-president, the secretary and the treasurer, put their two first-fingers under the person, just the tips of them, and do certain things, and hold their breath, and lift the person up as high as they can reach in the air. I was the secretary. There is no weight to the person at all—she just goes up like a balloon. Then you let them down. If you breathe, or if they breathe, while they are up, they fall with a bang, and it nearly kills them. It knocked the breath all out of Mary Watterson so that we had about decided she wasn't going to breathe any more. She would begin, but she couldn't seem to go on, and her lips were blue, really. However, she did after a while, and though she was all black and blue on her hip, and afterwards green, and had to be excused from gymnasium for a few days—she said she fell out of bed—she was all right finally. But it was her own fault, for she laughed and took her breath.

Weeksey is no great wonder, but she is kind-hearted. —Page 200.

When Gray told us about this, we didn't believe it, as I said. But we laid one of the girls down and tried. We couldn't budge her an inch, even by lifting hard, which you mustn't do. Then Gray remembered the certain words—I think I might say it is a kind of verse—and we said them, and lifted her to our knees, and it surprised us so that we dropped her. She wouldn't try again, and we had to tease her dreadfully and make the vice-president give her her place in the raising to keep her from telling, she was so mad. I punish her for this piece of sneakiness by not giving her name in this history. The vice-president was Eleanor Northrop.

We lifted her next and she went up to our waist, and that was as high as we could get before dinner, but after that we practised a good deal, and took the oath, and Gray told us all she knew about voodoo, and Ben, of course, found out a lot more in some way or other, and before long we could raise anybody up as high as we could lift our arms, on the tips of our fingers. Miss Naldreth says that there is nothing in voodoo and that it is impossible for it to help us; but I notice that the more we talked about it the more easily the girls went up. I believe in the Bible, of course, and I know that thou shalt have none other Gods but me, but just the same I believe in voodoo, too, and always shall, though I have promised never to raise people any more, and of course shall keep my word.

I also notice that when Gray and Ben—this was just before they stopped speaking—made the wax (only it was putty, left by the man that mended the storm-windows) figure of the Creepy-cat, and stuck pins in the arms, not wishing to hurt any of her main organs which she is always talking about—and if they look like that awful manikin-thing that is all red inside and keeps opening till you get right through to the spine in the back, I don't wonder that she is filled with amazement as she says, whenever she thinks of them—I notice that she got rheumatism in the shoul-

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der and had to ask one of the older girls to lead the exercises. It is true she got over it when the line-storm was over, *but would she, if it had been real wax, and not window putty?* As they say in "Hamlet," that is the question.

After the first meeting we met in the cloak-room for the day scholars, in the basement, because there was no furniture in the way, and we broke up the Society for the Pretender and just changed into the one this history is about. I have mentioned the name before.

Ben found in a book by the author of "Kidnapped," a fine story all about voodoo, and read it to us in our room, only she got so excited that when the floor creaked she fell backwards—she was sitting on the footboard of my bed—and scared us nearly to death, it was so sudden.

We did all the rites we could think of, and as soon as anybody was initiated she could help raise the rest—but no day scholars. Elmbank, as you probably know, is quite noted for younger girls; sometimes there are as many as twenty-five at a time, so the Society got very large.

Her own mother says to powder your face if it looks shiny.

It was then that the beginning of the end, that is to say Weeksey, took place.

Weeksey is no great wonder, but she is kind-hearted and doesn't think you are necessarily an infant because you're only thirteen. She is very fat and breathes in a noisy manner, and her hair is straight and a sort of drab. She has beginning Latin, and English History for the younger ones, so we see a great deal of her. She will read to you if you are sick, and what is more, read what you like, not stories for girls. I know that when I was getting over the measles she read me "Under Two Flags," and cried herself when Cigarette dies. Of course she skipped parts, but I read them afterwards, so nothing was lost.

Ben got talking to her about some things in the voodoo story that we didn't understand very well, Mormons especially, and she was so interested and sat with us after study-hour every evening, that we never suspected any treachery, or that she was put up to it; and when we found that she had had a darky for a nurse once, and knew some of the songs that Gray sings, we got confidential, and Ben got excited, the way she always does when grown people pay attention to her, and let some secret things out. She was awfully ashamed of it, I know, though she said afterwards that she had thoroughly tested Weeksey and had always meant to make her a member of the Society, so as to be believed when the matter came before the public, if we had to be persecuted on account of the putty figure of the Creepy-cat. But I know better.

Anyway she surprised us nearly to death by nominating Weeksey for the Society. Of course there had never been a teacher in any of the societies before, except in the big girls' clubs that there's no sense in anyway, they not being secret at all, but with papers read on Thursdays and any of the family that are visiting you at the time can come.

I was against it from the beginning, but Eleanor and Gray thought it would be perfectly grand. Eleanor's set call everything "perfectly grand," and since Gray and Ben stopped speaking, the latter—I mean the former—that is, Gray, has rather got in with them, though I've heard since that they think she's not old enough, though she does wave her hair, and her own mother says to powder your face if it looks shiny!

So in an evil hour, as the ballads say, we sent an invitation to Miss Ellen Lucy

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Going out very still in bath-wrappers, especially in the halls.

Weeks to present herself in the cloak-room D. V. at quarter past five Friday morning. I will not say that I wasn't rather proud to write a letter like that to a teacher, because I was. I suppose it was never done before. Nor will be again, if you have any sense. I suppose you probably think we were crazy to do it, but in the first place, Ben stops at nothing when her mind is once made up, and in the second place Weeksey wasn't quite like the other teachers. Don't think for a moment we'd have sent a letter like that to Polly-Cracker—I should say not. Or for that matter, the Pie.

But it simply shows how little you can trust to appearances, which, as the Bible says, are deceitful. All this time Weeksey was really against us in her heart, though she said afterwards she was not, but really working for our best good. But you know what that usually means.

I myself heard Miss Naldreth tell Dr. Welles that it seemed incredible that nineteen little girls could meet in any room in her school at half-past five in the morning for a series of weeks undiscovered—her very words—but all I can say is, we did. Probably we couldn't have if we slept in dormitories like some schools, but we have our own rooms at Elmbank just like the big girls, and by going out very still in bath-wrappers, especially in the halls, and not coming back together, but one or two at a time, it was accomplished.

Of course the initiations were very still, both for solemness and common sense, and the cloak-room being on the ground floor, and even more than that, for it was the basement with windows of which the tops are even with the ground, it was as private a place as you could wish.

So Weeksey came, D.V., at half-past five Friday morning, and after that, catch me doing anything important on Friday! I must say she acted more scared than we did, and sort of shy, really. Not that you could blame her when you consider that oath. Even Ben admits that it couldn't be better.

I don't know why we weren't more afraid of Weeksey, but we weren't. You see, having her read to you, and knowing that as soon as you come to the subjunctive you drop her directly and go on to advanced Latin with somebody else makes a difference in your feelings. Ben heard the Professor from Harvard say to Dr. Welles that he rather wondered to see a relic of that type left in such a thoroughly modern school, and Dr. Welles said that Miss Naldreth knew what she was about usually, and that in this case she was abundantly justified—his very words. Ben says that means that none of the other teachers could have got into the Society—certainly none of them would have been such a brick after it was all over.

This teaches us that it is not always the cleverest people that stand by you the best, and Ben says it is why you usually like your family.

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She was so light there was nothing to her.

Well, we had Weeksey lie down and explained it to her and told her about her breath, and strange to say she didn't seem to doubt it at all. But by what she did afterwards, that is to say, fainting away and acting so queer, we judge, Ben and I, that this is the way of it. *She didn't believe us a bit, but only did it to humor us!*

And as Ben very wisely says, considering this and how dreadfully surprised she must have been, all the more of a brick she was to keep her head and not fall down and sqwush us to pieces, as she would otherwise have done, none of us being big and she enormous.

Although at first we could not get her up at all. She just lay there and smiled at us, looking so silly and queer. Then Ben got dreadfully mad and I could see she was ashamed, Weeksey being really her idea, and some of the girls being frightened anyway. So she shut her lips up tight, the way she does, and just stared at us, and I trembled, really, she looked so strange. Eleanor Northrop says that she felt funny in her legs when Ben gave her that look, and Gray says she knew then that it would be done presently, which it was. I believe it was Ben making up her mind, nothing else.

Weeksey went up slowly a little way, and then very suddenly she was so light there was nothing to her, and I didn't do any raising at all, I was so surprised. We had two extra girls that day, Weeksey being so big, but really there were but five, for I didn't count. Gray felt the same as I, but Ben says she was heavy. The other three were too excited to remember how they felt.

Of all the people I have helped to raise Weeksey was the lightest, except Mary Watterson, who was on our very tippest finger-nails—the one that fell, you remember, and turned green.

What Weeksey's feelings were we shall never know—in this world, as Constantia would say, but I doubt if we do in the next, either. The girls who were not raising said that she rolled her eyes and her hands clutched, but that was all—she never squeaked. And she lay out straight and did as she was bidden by the valiant band, as the poem says. Our feelings were different, of course. Miss Naldreth allowed Ben and me to describe them to the Professor from Harvard, though we could not initiate any more, because she said that I was unusually well-balanced and that nothing could make Ben more self-conscious than she was—her very words. It is hard to describe. You feel cool inside and light, and something—but not your heart—goes beat, beat inside of you. I always shut my eyes and remember funny verses of poetry, but Ben just glares at the wall and says to herself, "You must go up! You must go up!" Says inside her mind, you know, not aloud. Gray says that something runs up and down her legs, like scratching mosquito-netting with your nails. Eleanor's head gets swimmy—she says everything looks white.

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These are the differences. The sameness is that you never remember how they come down. They are on the floor, that's all. Ben and I have tried again and again, but we can't seem to remember.

This is when you raise them. There is no good in trying to tell how you feel when you are raised. We have talked it over and it can't be done. We all know what we mean, but we can't say it.

It makes Ben awfully mad—it is the first thing she has never been able to say. She asked the Professor from Harvard if it was possible to have things that were very plain and you knew them perfectly, but you couldn't say anything that meant anything like it. And he said it was, but would she try. And she tried and I shan't say what she said because it was so silly. But I saw what she meant. And poor Ben was so mad and so excited with the success of it all and Weeksey fainting and the Professor shaking hands with her and Dr. Welles writing down things on a pad and all, that she began to cry—she couldn't seem to stop. Ben almost never cries, and never for being sad, only when she is angry at people for being such fools and for processions with drums and stories like that one of Kipling's, where they say "The Queen, God bless her!" and break the glasses.

And then Miss Naldreth got up and said, "That will do, gentlemen. Benigna, you may go. You realize the wisdom, nay, the necessity of my ultimatum, Professor?" (Her very words.)

"But, but Miss Naldreth," said the Professor from Harvard, kind of stuttering, "one moment! You don't seem to realize that this is an occasion of tremendous importance! Here we have an absolutely unprecedented and authenticated situation with nineteen actual witnesses! A woman of one hundred and seventy-three pounds raised to the utmost height of six small fingers——" (I don't need to say, I hope, that these were *his* very words.)

"I have a duty to the parents of these children," said Miss Naldreth, and then she went on in that voice that makes you feel so queer. It was about us not being sacrificed to science, but of course nobody sacrifices now.

"These children have given me their words of honor, which I rely on absolutely," she ended up, "and I trust to yours to exert no pressure, though I am sure it would be useless if you did."

Which it would, as no girl in the memory of man ever broke her word to Miss Naldreth.

"Of course, of course, madam—good day," he said crossly, and got right up and went out. He left his hat and Dr. Welles had to take it to him. He said he was going to Virginia to talk to Gray's nurse, but Gray said much good might it do him, as Aunty wouldn't tell him a thing, but pre-

She began to cry.

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tend not to know what he was talking about, which happened exactly so.

It was the Creepy-cat that put Weeksey up to it, you see, and when she peeked in, having followed one of the girls, we had Weeksey down about to our shoulders, the other girls said. They were all standing around so she couldn't see a thing, and she persists that it wasn't so. But if the girls had screamed and we'd been scared and Weeksey had forgot about her breath, she'd have found out, the sneak!

Ben and I were in the linen-room eating pears one day and we heard her trying to get Weeksey to tell the secret charm. But do you believe it, old Weeksey wouldn't!

"I have given my word of honor to those little girls, Miss Kripsen," she said, "and I can't see why I should break it because they are not as old as I am. They would have no respect for vows of any kind, and I should certainly have none for myself." Which shows you that a person can be a brick even if she can't teach the subjunctive.

"It will be sure to leak out," the Creepy-cat said in her snappy way.

"Not after the talk Miss Naldreth had with them," said Weeksey. "I doubt if the other pupils even suspect. They will not speak to me about it, and I'm sure I don't care to discuss it."

"It is impossible; it never happened," said the Cat.

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio," said Weeksey, in solemn tones. Those were her very words. If you know what she meant, all right—I don't. In the first place the Cat's name is Katrina.

Constantia says she must have said, "There are more things in heaven *than* earth," which is true, she—Constantia says. Angels, for instance. But of course that has nothing to do with it. Constantia always was a little fool.

A VAGRANT'S EPITAPH

By Theodore Roberts

CHANGE was his mistress, Chance his counsellor.
Love could not keep him. Duty forged no chain.
The wide seas and the mountains called to him,
And gray dawns saw his camp-fires in the rain!

Sweet hands might tremble!—Ay, but he must go.
Revel might hold him for a little space,
But turning, past the laughter and the lamps,
His eyes must ever catch the luring face.

Dear eyes might question!—Yea, and melt again.
Rare lips, a-quiver, silently implore,
But ever he must turn his furtive head
And hear the other summons at the door.

Change was his mistress, Chance his counsellor.
The dark firs knew his whistle up the trail.
Why tarries he to-day?—And yesternight
Adventure lit her stars without avail!

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THE SOLDIER OF THE VALLEY

BY NELSON LLOYD

ILLUSTRATIONS BY A. B. FROST

X

MARY sat knitting. Beware of a woman who knits. The keenest lawyer in our county is not so clever a cross-examiner as his sister when she sits with her needles and yarn. Questions directed at one can be parried. You expect them and dodge. The woman knits and knits, and lulls you half to sleep, and then in a far-away voice asks questions. They come as a boon, a gracious acknowledgment that you exist, and though in her mind your place is secondary to the flying needles and the tangled worsted, still you are there and she is half listening to what you have to say. So you tell her twice as much as is wise. You have no interest for her. Her eyes are fixed on her work. She asks you the secret of your life, and then bends farther over, seeming to forget your existence. Desperate, you shout it at her, and she looks up and smiles, a wondering distraught smile; then goes on knitting.

There were some things in Tim's letter that I did not intend to tell Mary. He had written them to me in confidence. A man does not mind letting one of his fellows know he is in love with a woman, but to let a woman know it is different. She will think him a fool, unless she is his inspiration. I knew Tim. I knew that he was no fool, and I did not wish her to get such an impression. I loved a pretty woman. So did Tim. But Mary would not understand it in Tim's case. That was why I folded the letter when I had read the first four pages.

But Mary was knitting. "It is fine to think he is getting along so well," she said.

She looked up, but not at me. Her face was turned to the window; her eyes were over the valley which was growing gray now, for the sun was down. What she saw there I could not tell. A drearier sight is hard to find than our valley when the chill of the November evening is creeping over it as the fire in the west goes out. Night covers it, and it sleeps. But the winter twilight raises up its shadows. In the darkness all is hidden. In the half-light, there is utter loneliness.

I turned from the window to the letter, and Mary looked at me for the first time in many minutes.

"Are you going to read the rest of the letter?" she demanded.

"You have heard 'most all of it," I replied evasively.

"And the rest?" she said.

"Is of no interest," I answered. "It's just a few personal, confidential things. Perhaps some time I can tell you."

"Oh," she exclaimed carelessly, and went on knitting, drawing closer to the lamplight.

"How long is it since he left?" she asked at last, reaching down to untangle the worsted from the end of the rocker.

"Six weeks," said I. "It's just six weeks coming to-morrow since Tim and I parted at Pleasantville. To think he has been promoted already! At that rate he should be head of the firm in a year or two."

"Mr. Weston has been very kind," said she. "Of course he has seen that Tim has every chance. He is the most thoughtful man I ever knew. He——"

Weston's excellent qualities were well known to me. I had discovered them long ago, and I did not care to hear Mary descant on them at length. He had done much for Tim, but it was what Tim had done for himself that I was proud of, so I interrupted her rather rudely.

"Yes, he got Tim his place; but you must remember Mr. Weston has hardly been in New York a day since the boy left. He doesn't bother much about business, so after all, Tim is working his way alone."

"Yes," said Mary. She had missed a stitch somewhere, and it irritated her greatly. That was evident by the way she picked at

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it. She remedied the trouble somehow, recovered her composure, and went on knitting.

"Was it eight dollars he is making, did you say?" she asked.

"Yes, eight," I replied, verifying the figure with a glance at the letter.

"A week or a month?"

"A week. Just think of it—that is more than I got in the army."

But Mary was not a bit impressed. I remembered that she came from Kansas, and in Kansas a dollar is not so big as in our valley.

"Living is so expensive in the city," she said absently. "With eight dollars a week here Tim would be a millionaire. But in New York——" A shrug of the shoulder expressed her meaning.

"True," said I, a bit ruefully.

I had expected her to clasp her hands, to look up at me and listen to my stories of Tim's success, and hear my dreams for his future. Instead, she went on knitting, never once raising her eyes to me. It exasperated me. In sheer chagrin I took to silence and smoking. But she would not let me rest long this way, though I was slowly lulling myself into a state of semi-coma, of indifference to her and calm disdain.

"Of course Tim has made some friends," she said, glancing up from her work very casually.

"Of course he has," I snapped.

"That's nice," she murmured—knitting, knitting, knitting.

I expected her to ask who his friends were, and how he had made them. That was all in the letter. Moreover, it was in the part I had not read to her. But she abruptly abandoned this line of inquiry. She did not care. She let me smoke on.

Suddenly she dropped her work and asked, "Is that a footstep on the porch?"

"Footsteps! No—why, who did you think was coming?" I said.

"Mr. Weston promised to drop in on his way home from hunting—but I guess he'll disappoint me. I'd hoped it was him." She fell to her task again, only now she began to hum softly, thus shutting me off entirely.

For a very long while I endured it, but the time came when action of some kind was called for. We were not married, that I could sit forever smoking while she hummed. Even in Black Log etiquette requires that a man talks to a woman when in her company; and when the woman ceases to listen, the wise man departs. That was just what I did not want to do, and only one alternative was left me. I got out the letter and held it under the light.

"You were asking about Tim's friends, Mary," said I.

"Was I?" she returned. "I had forgotten. What did I say?"

"You asked if he had made any friends," I replied, as calmly as I could. "I was going to read you what he said."

"Oh!" she cried. And at last she dropped her knitting, and resting her elbows on her knees, clasping her chin in her hands, she looked up at me from her low chair. "I thought it was forbidden," she said.

"Tim didn't say anything about not reading it," I answered. "At first, though, it seemed best not to; but you'll understand, Mary. Of course, we mustn't take him too seriously, but it does sound foolish. Poor Tim!"

"Poor Tim!" repeated the girl. "He must be in love."

"He is," said I.

"Then don't read it!" she cried. "Surely he never intended you to read it to me."

"Of course he did," I laughed, for at last I had aroused her, and now her infernal knitting was forgotten; she no longer strained her ears for Weston's footfalls. Her eyes were fixed on me. "Poor old Tim! Well, let's wish him luck, Mary. Now listen."

So I read her the forbidden pages.

"'You should see Edith Parker, Mark. She is so different from the girls of Black Log. Her father is head book-keeper in the store, and he has been very good to me. Last week he took me home to dinner with him. He has a nice house in Brooklyn. His wife is dead, and he has just his daughter. We have no women in Black Log that compare to her. She is tall and slender and has fair hair and blue eyes.'"

"I hate fair-haired women," broke in Mary with some asperity. "They are so vain."

"I agree with you," said I. "That is

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invariably the case, and dark hair is so much more beautiful; but we must make allowance for Tim. Let us see—'fair hair and blue eyes and the sweetest face'—I do believe that brother of mine is out of his head to write such stuff."

"He certainly is," said Mary very quietly. "Poor Tim! But go on."

"'We played cards together for a while, till old Mr. Parker went asleep in his chair, and then Edith and I had a chance to talk. You know, Mark, I've always been a bit afraid of women, and awkward and ill at ease around them. But Edith is different from the girls of Black Log. We were friends in a minute. You don't know what it is to talk to these girls who have been everywhere and seen everything, and know everything. They are so much above you, they inspire you. For a girl like that no sacrifice a man can make is too great. To win a girl like that a man must do something and be something. Now up in Black Log——'"

Aaron Kallaberger

"Yes, up in Black Log the women are different," said Mary in a quiet voice. "They have to work in Black Log, and it's the men they work for. If they sat on thrones and talked wisdom and looked beautiful, the kitchen fires would die out and the children go naked."

"Tim doesn't say anything disparaging to the people of our valley," I protested. "He says, 'in Black Log the girls don't understand how to dress. They deck themselves out in gaudy finery. Now Edith wears the simplest things. You never notice her gown. You only see her figure and her face.'"

"Do I deck myself out in gaudy finery, Mark?" Mary's appeal was direct and simple.

A shake of the head was my only answer. I wanted to tell her that Tim was blind. I wanted to tell her the boy was a fool; that Edith, the tall, thin, pale creature, was not to be compared to one woman in our valley; that I knew who that woman was; that I loved her. I would have told her this. With a sudden impulse I leaned toward her. As suddenly I fell back. My crutches had clattered to the floor!

A battered veteran! A pensioner! A backwoods pedagogue! That I was. That I must be to the end. My place was in the school-house. My place was on the store bench, set away there with a lot of other broken antiquities. That I should ask a woman to link her life with mine, was absurd. A fair ship in a fair sea soon parts company with a derelict—unless it tows it. A score of times I had fought this out, and as often I had found but one course and set myself to follow it. But there was that in Mary's quiet eyes that shook my resolution. There was an appeal there, and trust.

"I am glad, anyway, I am not so much above you, Mark," she said, now laughing.

I had gathered up my crutches and the letter. I had gathered up my wits again.

"There's where I feel like Tim, indeed," I said.

"I don't think I should like this lofty Edith," the girl exclaimed. "What a pompous word it is—Edith! Tim is ambitious. I suppose he rolls that name over and over in his mind."

It seemed that Mary was unnecessarily sharp toward a young woman she had never seen and of whom she had as yet heard nothing but good. While for myself I felt a certain resentment at Tim for his praise of this girl and the condescending references to my own misfortune in never having seen her like, I had for him a certain keen sympathy and hope for his success. I had a certain sympathy for Edith, too, for a man in love, if unrestrained in his praise, will make a plain, sensible,

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motherly girl look like a frivolous fool. Perhaps in this case Edith was the victim. I suggested this to Mary, and she laughed softly.

"Perhaps so," she said. "But I must admit it irritates me to see our Tim lose his head over a stranger. I can only picture her as he does—a superior being, who lives in Brooklyn, whose name is Edith, and who wears her hair in a small knot on top of her head. Can you conceive her smile, Mark, if she saw us now—if this fine Brooklyn girl with her city ways dropped down here in Black Log?"

"That's all in Tim's letter," I cried. "Listen. 'She asked all about my home and you. I told her of the place and of all the people, of Mary and Captain. Last night I took over that picture of you in your uniform, and I won't tell you all the nice things she said about you, and——'"

"She's a flatterer," cried Mary.

"I am beginning to love her myself," said I. "But listen to Tim. 'She told me she hoped to see Black Log some day, and to meet the soldier of the valley. I said that I hoped she would, too, but I didn't tell her that a hundred times a day, as I worked over the books in the office, I vowed that some day soon I'd take her there myself.'"

"As Mrs. Tim," Mary added, for I was folding up the letter.

"As Mrs. Tim, evidently," said I. "Poor old Tim! It's a very bad case."

"Poor old Tim!" said Mary.

She took up her needles and her work, and fell to knitting.

"I suppose they must be very rich—the Parkers, I mean." This was offered as a wedge to break the silence, for the needles were going very rapidly now, and the stitches seemed to call for the closest watching.

"Yes," said Mary.

I lighted my pipe again.

"What a grand man Tim will be when he comes back home." I suggested this after a long silence. "He'll look fine in his city clothes, for somehow those city men do dress differently from us country chaps. Now just picture Tim in a—in a——"

Mary was humming softly to herself.

XI

THE county paper always comes on Thursday. This was Thursday. Elmer Spiker sat behind the stove, in a secluded corner, the light of the lamp on the counter falling over his left shoulder on the leading column of locals. Elmer was reading. There was a store rule forbidding him to read aloud, which caused him much hardship, for as he worked his way slowly down the column, his right eye and left ear kept twitching and twitching as though trying to keep time with his lips.

Josiah Nummler's long pole rested on the counter at his side, and his great red hands were spread out to drink in the heat from the glowing bowl of the stove.

"It's a-blowin' up most a-mighty, ain't it?" he said, cheerfully. "Any news, Elmer?"

"Oh now, go home," grunted Mr. Spiker, rolling his pipe around so the burning tobacco scattered over his knees. "See what you've done!" he snapped angrily, brushing away the sparks.

"I didn't notice you was in the middle of a word, Elmer, really I didn't," pleaded old Mr. Nummler.

"I wasn't in the middle of a word," retorted Elmer, as he drove his little finger into his pipe in an effort to save some of the tobacco. "I was just beginnin' a new piece. Things is gittin' so there ain't a place left in this town for a man to read in peace and comfort. Here I am, tryin' to post up on the local doin's, on polytics and religion, and ringin' in my ears all the time is 'lickin' the teacher, lickin' the teacher, lickin' the teacher.' S'pose every man here did lick the teacher in his time—what of it, I says, what of it?"

"Yes, what of it?" said I, closing the door with a bang.

I was plodding home from Mary's. She had hummed me out at last, and I had tucked Tim's letter in my pocket and hobbled back to the village. The light in the store had drawn me aside and I stopped a moment just to look in. The store is always a fascinating place. There is always something doing there, and I opened the door a crack just to hear what was under discussion. Catching the same

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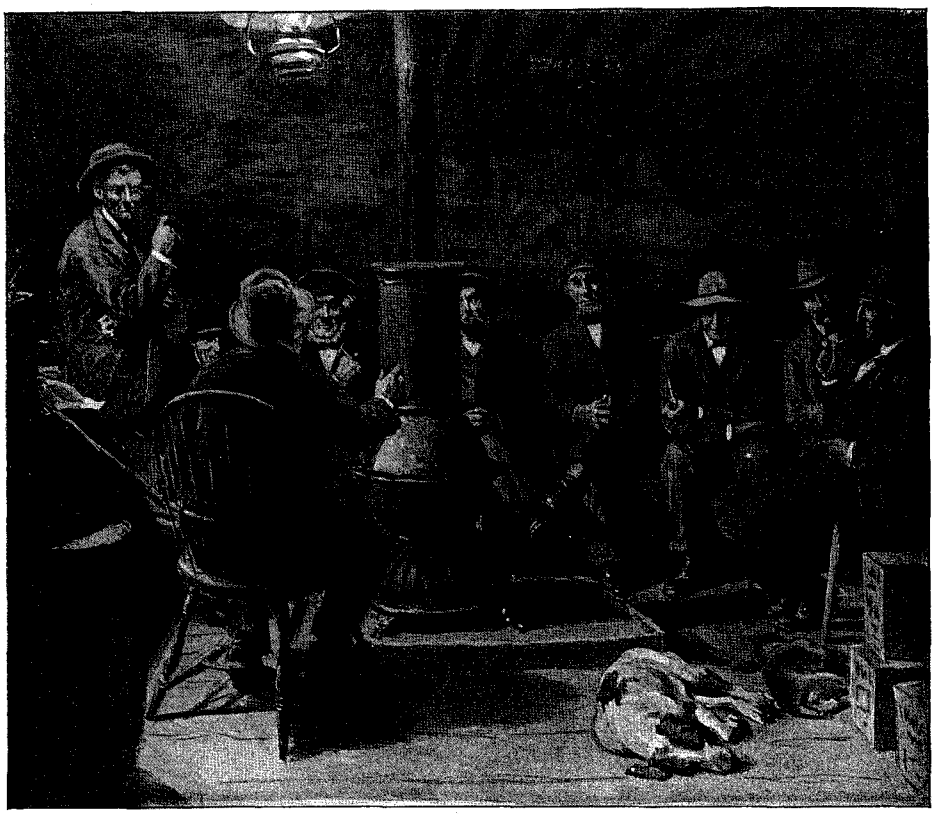

"The he-roes of old."—Page 214.

refrain as troubled Elmer Spiker, I entered.

"What of it?" I demanded, facing the company. "I don't believe there is a man here who ever thrashed the teacher."

Theophilus Jones raised himself from the counter on which he was leaning, and waved a lighted candle above his head.

"Here comes the teacher—make way for the teacher!"

Josiah Nummler pounded the floor with his long pole.

"See the conquerin' hero comes," he cried. "A place for him—a place for him!" And with the point of his pole he drove the six men on the bench so close together as to give me an excellent seat at his side.

"Thrice welcome, noble he-ro, as Perry Thomas says!" shouted Aaron Kallaberger, thrusting his hand in his bosom in excellent imitation of the orator.

"He's lookin' pretty spry yet, ain't he boys?" said Isaac Bolum. He stood before me, leaning over till his hands clasped his knees, and peering into my face, smiling. "The teacher ain't changed a bit."

"Thank you for the reception," said I. "But explain. What's this all about?"

Elmer Spiker had folded the county paper and had come around to our side of the stove. There he struck his favorite attitude, which was always made more effective by the endless operation of putting his spectacles in their case—pulling them out—waving them—*ad infinitum*. For in our valley spectacles are the sceptre of the sovereign intellect.

"They was talkin' about lickin' the teacher," Elmer said, "and sech talkin' I never heard. It was the nonsensicalest yet. The way them boys was tellin' about the teachers they had knowd made me fear for your life when I seen you come in. I thought they'd fall on you like so many wolves."

"Now see here, Elmer Spiker," shouted Henry Holmes, "that's an injestice. I

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never said I'd licked the teacher when I was a boy. I only said I'd tried it."

"You give me to understand that the teacher was dead now," returned Elmer severely.

"He is," cried Henry.

"And you claim you done it."

"I done it," shouted Mr. Holmes, pounding the floor with his cane. "I done it! You think I'm a murderer? Why, old Gilbert Spoonholler was ninety-seven year old when he went away. He was only forty when him and me had it out."

"That's different," said Elmer calmly. "I understood from your original account that he died in battle."

"I tho't so too, Henery," put in Isaac Bolum. "You misled me, complete. 'Here,' says I, 'at last I have met a man who has licked the teacher.' And all the time you was tellin' about it, we was admirin' you—Joe Nummler and me—and now we finds Gil Spoonholler lived fifty-seven year after that terrible struggle."

"I can't just fetch my memory back to that particular incident, Henery," said Josiah, "but my recollection is that Gil Spoonholler held the school-house agin all comers, and that's sayin' a good deal, for we was tough as hickory, when we was young."

"The modern boys is soft," Aaron Kallaberger declared. "They regards the teacher in a friendlier light than they used to. They are weakenin'. The military sperrit's dyin' out. The spectacle is conquerin' the sword."

This was too direct a slap at Elmer Spiker to pass unnoticed. Elmer was too old an arguer to use any ponderous weapon in return. He even smiled as he punctuated his sentences with his battered leather spectacle case.

"You never said a truer word, Aaron. It allus was true. It allus will be true. It's just as true to-day as when Henery Holmes tackled old Gilbert Spoonholler; as when Isaac Bolum yander argyed with Luke Lampson that five times eleven was forty-five; as when you refused to admit to the same kind teacher that Harrisburg was the capital of Pennsylwany."

"And as to-day when William Bellus——" Theophilus Jones was acting strangely. He was bowing politely at me.

I was mystified. Why at a time like this I should be treated as a subject of so much distinction was a puzzle, and I was about to demand an explanation, when Josiah Nummler interrupted.

"It's true," he said. "Teachers ain't changed and the boys ain't changed. I'm eighty years old within a week, and all my life I've heard boys blowin' about how they was goin' to lick the teacher, and I've heard old men tell how they done it years and years before—but I've never seen an eye-witness—what I wants is an eye-witness."

"You've been talkin' to Elmer Spiker," said Henry Holmes, plaintively. "He's convinced you. He'd convince anybody of anything. He's got me so dad-twisted I can't mind no more whether I went to school even."

"You never showed no signs, Henery." Isaac Bolum spoke very quietly.

"I guess you otter know it as well as anybody," Henry retorted angrily. "Your ma was allus askin' me to take care of you, and you was a nuisance, too, you was, Isaac. You was allus a-blubberin' and a-swallerin' somethin'. You mind the time you swallered my copper cent, don't you? You mind the fuss your ma made to my ma about it, don't you? Why, she formulated regular charges that I 'tempted to pizon you—she did, and——"

"Don't rake up them old, old sores," said Josiah Nummler soothingly. "Ike'll give you back your copper cent, Henery."

"All Ike's property to-day ain't as val'able to me now as that cent was then," Mr. Holmes answered solemnly. "It was the val'ablest cent I ever owned. I never expect to have another I'd hate so to see palpitatin' in Isaac Bolum's th'oat between his Adam's apple and his collar band."

"We're gittin' away from the subject," said Josiah. "You're draggin' up a personal quarrel between you and Isaac Bolum, when we was discussin' the great problem that confronts every scholar in his day—that of thrashin' the teacher."

"It's a problem no scholar ever solved in the history of this walley, anyway," declared Elmer Spiker.

"It ain't on the records," said Kallaberger.

"There are le-gends," Isaac Bolum said. He pointed at Henry Holmes with his thumb. "Sech as his."

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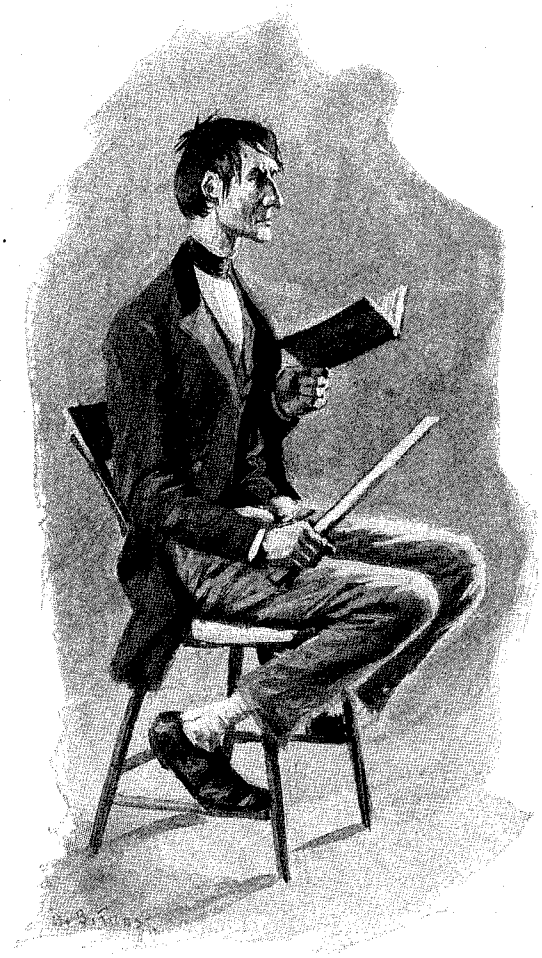
"Yes," said Josiah Nummler, "we have sech le-gends, comin' mostly from the Indians and Henery Holmes. But there's one I got from my pap when I was a boy, and I allus thought it one of the most be-yutiful fairy stories I'd ever heard—of course except-in' them in the Bible. It was about Six Stars school, here, and the boy's name was Ernest, and the teacher's Le-ander. It was told to my pap by his pap, so you can see that as a le-gend it was older than them of Hen-ery Holmes."

"It certainly sounds more interestin'," ex-claimed Isaac Bolum.

Old Mr. Holmes started to protest, but Aaron Kalla-berger quieted him with an offering of to-bacco. By the time his pipe was going, Jo-siah was well into his story.



Leander.

"Of all the teachers that ever tot in Six Stars this here Leander was the most fe-rocious. He was six feet two inches tall in his stockin's, and weighed no more than one hundred and thirty pound, stripped, but he was wiry. His arms was like long bands of iron. His legs was like hickory saplin's, and when he wasn't usin' them he allus kept them wound round the chair, so as to unspring 'em at a moment's notice and send himself flyin' at the darin' scholar. His face was white and all hung with hanks of black hair; his eyes was one minute like still intellectual pools and the next like burnin' coals of fire—that was my pap's way of puttin' it. Ernest was just his op-posite. He was a chunky boy with white hair and pale eyes. He was a nice boy when let alone, but in the whole fif-teen years of his life he'd never had no call to bound Kansas or tell the capital of Californy out-side of school hours, so he regarded Le-ander with a fierce and childlike hat-red. But Ern-est had a noble streak in him, too. For him-self he would 'a' suffered in silence. It was the constant oppression of the helpless lit-tle ones that saddened him. It was madden-in' to have to sit silent every day while tiny girls, no older than ten, was being hounded from one end of the g'ography to the other. He seen small boys, shavers under eight, scratchin' holes in their heads with slate pencils, tryin' to make out why two and two was four; he seen girls, be-yutiful young girls of his own age, drove almost to distrac-tion by black-boards full of diagrams from the grammar book. And allus before him, the inspirin' note of the whole systematic system of torturin' the young, was the rod; broodin' over it all, like a black cloud, was Leander's repytation, was the memory of

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the boys as had gone before. For years Ernest bore all this. Then come a time when he was called to a position of responsibility in the school. One after another, the biggest boys had fallen. A few had gradyeated. Others had argyed with the teacher and become as broken reeds, was stedyin' regular and bein' polite like. In them years, whether he wanted it or not, Ernest had rose up. His repytation was spotless. His age entitled him to the Fifth Reader class, but he was still spellin' out words in the Third; fractions was only a dream to him, and he couldn't 'a' told you the difference between a noun and a wild carrot. But through it all he'd been so humble and polite that Leander looked on him as a kind of half-witted lamb."

"This here is the longest fairy story I ever heard tell of," said Elmer Spiker. "We haven't even had a sign of the princess."

"And there is a prin-cess in this here le-gend," returned Josiah. "She was a be-yutiful one, too. Her name was Pinky Binn, a dotter of the house of Binn, the Binns of Turkey Walley. She had the reddish hair of the Binns and the pearl-blue eyes of the Rummelsbergers from over the mountains. Her ma was a Rummelsberger. She wasn't too spare, nor was she too fleshy; she was just rounded right; and when she smiled—ah, boys, when Pinky Binn smiled at Ernest from behind her g'ography his heart went like its spring had broke. Yet he never showed it. It would have been ruination for him to let it be known by sign or act that Pinky Binn was other than the general class of weemen; for is there anything worse than weemen in general? It's the exceptions, allus the exceptions, raises trouble with a man. Pinky Binn was Ernest's exception. But the time of his great trial come, and he was true. He stepped forth in his right light before all the school; he showed himself what he was—the gentle lover, the masterful fighter, the heroic-est scholar Six Stars school had ever seen."

"He whipped the teacher, I know," cried Henry Holmes. "I told you, Ike—he licked the teacher."

"This here is a fairy story, Henery," returned Isaac reprovingly.

"Even in a fairy story it 'ud be ridiculous to let a boy of fifteen beat a trained teacher," said Josiah Nummler. "He didn't quite, and it come this way. Leander asked Pinky Binn if he had eleven apples and multiplied them by five how many was they left. She says sixty-five. 'Figure it out agin,' he says, wery stern. So she works her fingers and her lips a-while, like she was deef and dumb. 'Five-timsone is five,' she says, 'and five-timsone agin is five and one to carry is six—sixty-five,' she says. 'Well, I'll be Scotch-Irished,' says Leander gittin' wery angry. 'Sech obtusety' (Leander allus used fancy words) 'is worthy of Ernest yander.' He pinted his long finger at Ernest and says, 'How much is five times eleven apples?' Ernest gits up and faces the teacher, wery ca'am and wery quiet. 'Sixty-five,' says he. 'It's fifty-five,' Leander shouts. Then says Ernest, wery cool, 'Pinky Binn says it's sixty-five, and Pinky Binn ain't no story-teller, and you hadn't otter call her one.' That takes all the talk out of the teacher. He just sets there wrappin' his legs round the chair and glarin'. Ernest's voice rings clear above the school now, like the Declaration of Independence. 'In Turkey Walley, teacher,' he says, 'five times eleven apples is sixty-five. They raises bigger apples there.'

"Leander's legs unsprung. He ketched Ernest by the hair and lifted him to the platform. Boys, you otter 'a' seen it. It was David and Goliath all over agin, only fightin' fair. Havin' Leander holdin' his hair give the boy an advantage—it was two hands agin one. Leander had but the one to operate his stick with, while Ernest was drivin' both fists right into the darkness in front of him. The stick was making no impression, and some of the small boys that didn't know no better begin to cheer. Boys, you otter 'a' been there. You'd have enjoyed it, Henery. Leander seen what he needed was tactics, and his regular tactics was to hold the scholar at arm's length by the hair. He tried it and it didn't work. Ernest was usin' tactics too. He wasn't wastin' strength and beatin' his arms around. He just smiled. That smile aroused the teacher in Leander agin. He couldn't stand it. He had never had a boy do that before; he forgot himself and sailed in. Boys, that was fightin' then. You'd have enjoyed it, Henery. Still, I guess it couldn't have been much to watch, for there was nothin' to see but dust—a rollin', roarin' cloud of it, backward and

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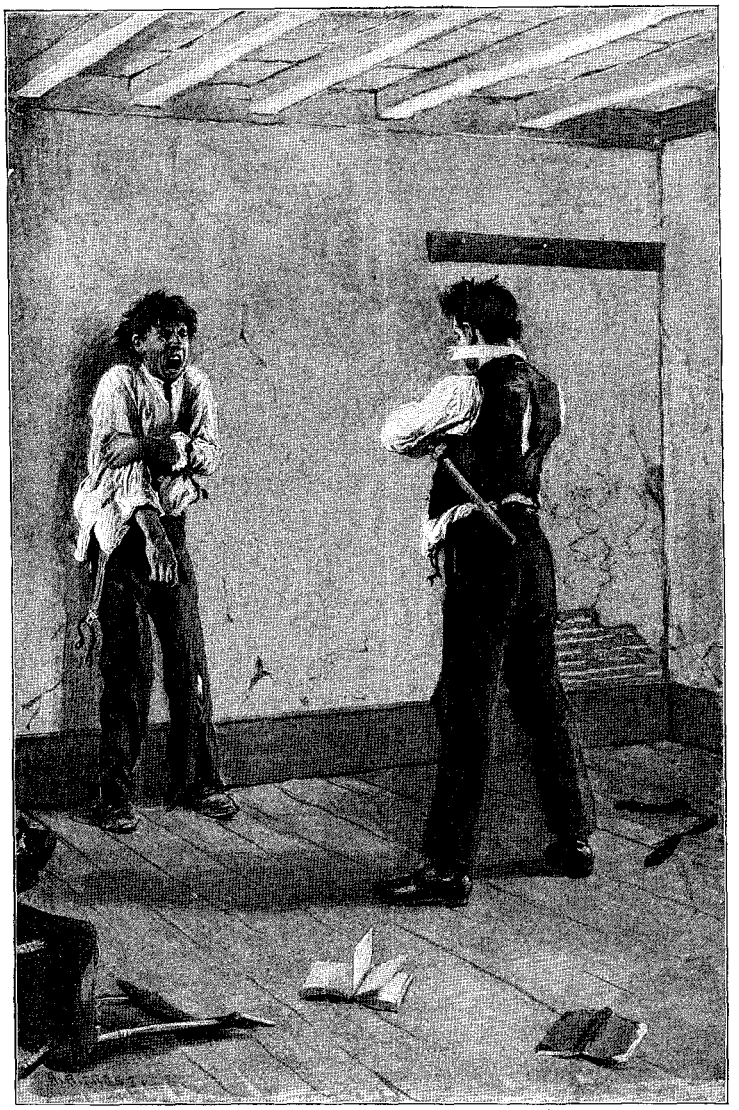

William had felt the hand of "Doogulus."—Page 214.

forward over the platform. I don't know just what happened. Pap couldn't tell. Leander couldn't 'a' told you. Ernest couldn't 'a' told you. There was war—real war, and after it come peace."

"Ernest whipped, I know," cried Henry Holmes.

"The teacher was licked—good—good!" echoed Isaac Bolum.

"No, boys," said Josiah solemnly, "that couldn't have been. Even in fairy stories sech things couldn't happen. But when the dust cleared away, Leander's body lay along the floor, and towerin' over him, one foot on his chest, stood the darin' scholar. I guess the teacher had been took ill."

"Mebbe it was appleplexy," suggested Elmer Spiker.

"Mebbe it was," said Josiah. "It must have been somethin' like that; but whatever it was, there stood the boy. 'You is free,' he says, addressin' the scholars. And the children broke from the seats and started for'a'd to worship him. And Pinky Binn was almost on her knees at his feet when a strange thing happened.

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"There was music. It come soft first, and hushed the school, and froze the scholars like statutes. Louder it come and louder—a heavenly choir—the melodium, the cordine, and the fiddle. Then a great white light flooded the school-room. It blinded the boys, and it blinded the girls. The music played softer and softer—the melodium, the cordine, and the fiddle—and with it, keepin' time with it, the light come softer, too; so lookin' up the scholars seen there in the celestial glow, a solemn company gethered round the boy—the he-roes of old—Hercules and General Grant, Joshuay and Washington—all the mighty fighters of history. Just one glimpse, the scholars had, for the music struck up louder, and the light glowed brighter and brighter till it blinded them. Softer and softer the music come—the melodium, the cordine, and the fiddle. It sounded like marchin', they said, and they heard the tramp, tramp, tramp of the sperrit soldiers. Then there was quiet—only the roarin' of the stove and the snufflin' of the little ones. And when they looked up Leander was alone—sittin' there on the platform, kind of rubbin' his eyes—alone."

There was silence in the store. Josiah Nummler's pipe was going full blast, and while the white cloud hid him from the others, I could see a gentle smile on his fat face.

"Mighty souls!" cried Henry Holmes, "that there's unpossible."

Josiah planted his pole on the floor and lifted himself to his feet.

"It's only a fairy story, Henery," he said.

"What does it illustrate?" cried Aaron Kallaberger. "Nothin', I says. We was talkin' about Mark and William Bellus, and you switches off on Leander and Ernest. To a certain p'int your story agrees with what my boy told me of the doin's in the school this afternoon."

"What doings?" I exclaimed. This talk puzzled me, and I was determined to get to the bottom of the mystery.

"Why, wasn't you there?" cried Isaac Bolum. "Wasn't it you and William?"

"No," I fairly shouted. "Perry Thomas had the school."

Josiah Nummler's pole clattered to the floor, and he sank into a chair.

"I see—I see," he gasped. "Poor William!"

"I see—I see," said I. "Poor William."

For William had felt the hand of "Doogulus."

XII

IT was young Colonel's first day of life. He had been born six months before, but for him that had simply been the beginning of existence. Now he was to live. He was to go with Captain, and with Betsy his mother, with Arnold Arker's Mike and Major, the best of his breed, to learn to take the trail and follow it, singing as he ran.

It was young Colonel's first day of life. He was out in the great dog world, and about him were the mighty hunters of the valley. Arnold Arker was there with his father's rifle, once a flintlock, always a piece of marvellous accuracy, and a hero as guns go, and the old man patted the puppy and pulled his silky ears. Tip Pulsifer approved of him. Tip shut one eye and gazed at him long and earnestly; he ran his bony fingers down the slender back to the very end of the agitated tail. One by one he took the heavy paws in his hands and stroked them. Then Tip smiled. Murphy Kallaberger smiled too, and declared that the young un took after his pa; clarifying this explanation he pointed his fat thumb over his shoulder to old Captain, beating around the underbrush.

It was young Colonel's first day of life. And what a day to live, I thought, as I stroked his head and wished him luck! He could not get it into his puppy brain that I was to wait there while the others went racing down the slope into the wooded basin below, so he lingered, to sit before me on his haunches, his head cocked to one side, eying me inquisitively. There was a tang in the air. The wind was sweeping along the ridge-top and the woods were shivering. All about us rattled Nature's bones, in the stirring leaves, in the falling pig-nuts, in the crash of the belated birds through the leafless branches. The sun was over us, and as I looked up to drink with my eyes of the warm light, I was taking a draught of God's best wine from off yonder in the north, of the wine that quickens the blood and drives away the brain-clouds. A day of days this was, to race

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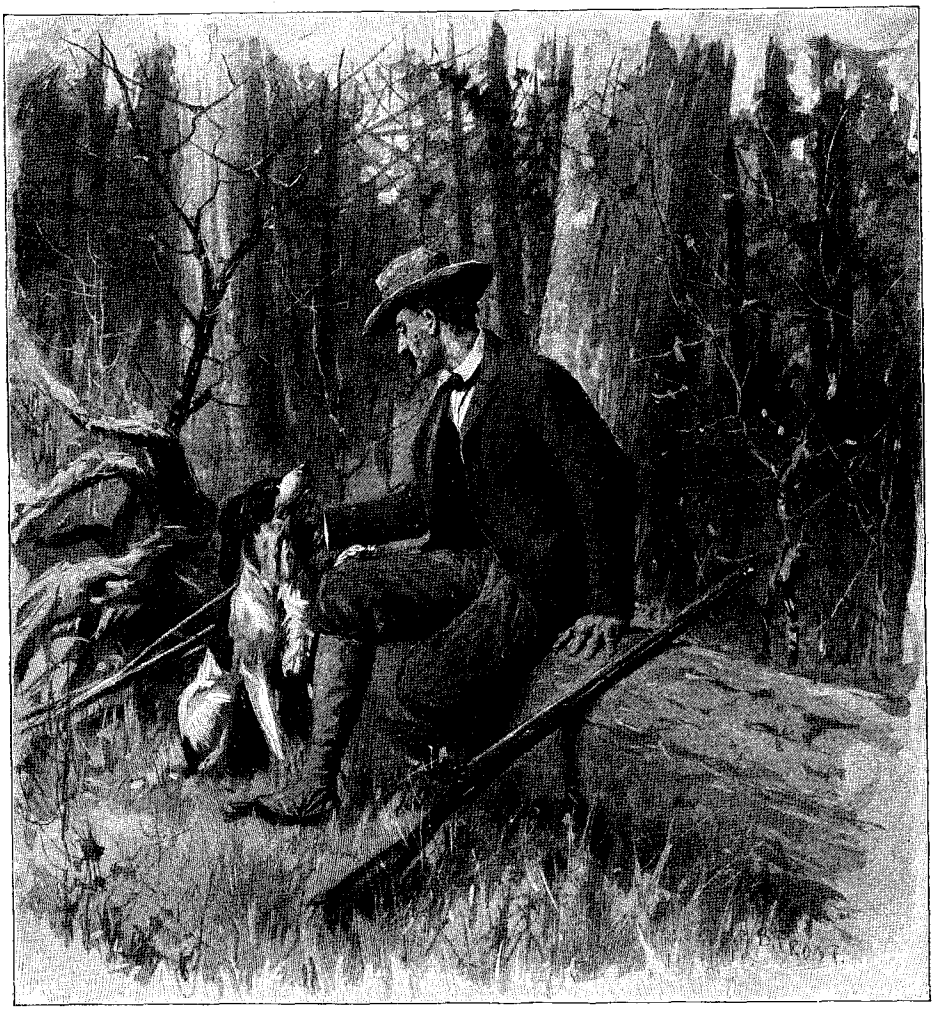

"Aren't you coming?" he seemed to say.

over the ridges while the music of the hounds rang through them; a day of days to dash from thicket to thicket over the hills and through the hollows, leaping logs and vaulting fences, with every sense keyed to the highest; for the fox is a clever general. So young Colonel was puzzled, for there I was on a log, at the crest of the ridge, with my crutches at one side and my gun at the other, when I should be away after old Captain, the real leader of the sport, after Arnold and Tip and Betsy. This was the best I could do, to sit here and listen and hope—listen as the chase went swinging along the ridges; hope that a kind fate and an unwise Reynard would bring them where I could add the bark of my rifle to the song of the hounds. You can't explain everything to a dog. With a puppy it is still harder. So Colonel was restless. He looked anxiously down the hill; then he lifted those soft, slantwise eyes to mine very wistfully.

"Go, Colonel," I commanded, pointing into the hollow.

Instead, he came to me and lifted to my knee one of those ponderous feet of his, and tried to pull me from my log.

"Aren't you coming?" he seemed to say.

"No, old chap," I answered, pulling the long ears gently till he smiled. "I prefer it here where I can look over the valley, and from here I can see where Mary lives—down yonder on the hillside; that's the

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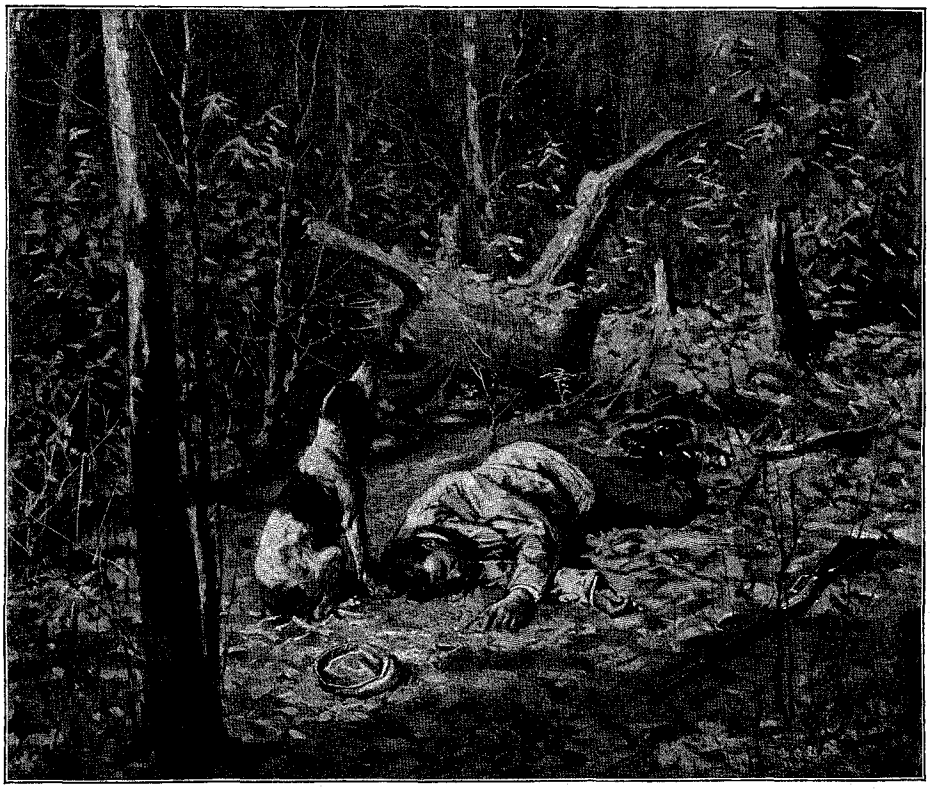

Sat little Colonel, wailing.—Page 220.

house by the clump of oaks, where the smoke is curling up so thick."

The slantwise eyes became grave, and the long tail paused. The second ponderous paw came crashing on my knee.

"Aren't you coming?" young Colonel seemed to say.

I was flattering myself that the puppy was choosing my company to the hunt, for I always value the approval of a dog. Now I found myself hoping that with a little coddling the young hound would forget the great doings down in the hollow and would stay with me on the ridge-top. But I should have known better. There is an end even to a dog's patience. The place for the strong-limbed is in the thick of the chase. You can't interest a puppy in scenery when his fellows are running a fox.

"Look, Colonel," said I, pointing over the valley, "yonder's where Mary lives, and I suspect that at this very minute she is looking out of the window to this very spot, and——"

The call of a hound floated up from the hollow. Old Captain was on a trail. With a shrill cry young Colonel answered. This was no time to loaf with a crippled soldier. With a long-drawn yelp, a childish imitation of his father's bay, he was off through the bushes. Young Colonel was living. And I was left alone on my log.

But this was my first day of life, too. Some twenty-four years before I had been born, but those years were simply existence. Now I was living. I had a secret. I had hinted at it to young Colonel. Had he stayed, I would have told him more, but like a fool he had gone jabbering off through the bushes, cutting a ludicrous figure, too, I thought, for his body had not yet grown up to his feet and ears, and he carried them off a bit clumsily. Had he stayed I might have told him all, and there never was a bit of news quite so important as that foolish puppy missed; never a story so romantic as that he might have heard; never in the valley's history an event of such interest. He had scorned it. Now he was with the dog mob down there in the

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gulch. I could hear them giving tongue, and I knew they were on an old trail. Soon they would be in full cry, but I did not care. It was fine to be in full cry, of course, but from my post on the ridge-top, I could at least keep in sight of the house by the clump of oaks on the hillside. Last week I should have moped and fumed here, and cursed my luck in being bound to a log on a day like this. Now I turned my face to the sunlight and drank in the keen air. Now I whistled as merry a tune as I knew.

"You seem to take well with solitude," came a voice behind me.

Looking about, I saw Robert Weston fighting his way through the thicket.

"I take better to company," I said. "Why have you deserted the others?"

Weston sat down at my side with his gun across his knees.

"Arnold Arker says there is a fox in that hollow," he answered. "You can hear the dogs now, and he thinks if they start him this is as good a place as any, as he is likely to run over on Buzzard ridge, and double back this way, or he'll give us a sight of him as he breaks from the gully. Then as we went away, I looked back and saw you sitting here and I envied you, for yours is the most comfortable post in all the ridges."

"When you could be somewhere else, yes," said I. "Having to sit here, I should prefer running closer to the dogs."

"As you have to stay here, I'd rather sit with you, and after all what could be better?" Weston laughed. "You know, Mark, in all the valley you are the man I get along with best."

"Because I've never tried to find out why you were here."

"For that reason I told you," said he. "How simple it was, too. There was no cause for mystery."

"It would still be a mystery to Elmer Spiker, say. He can't conceive a man living in the country by choice."

"To Elmer Spiker—indeed, to most of the folks around here, the city is man's natural environment. It's just bad luck to be country-born."

"Exactly," said I.

Weston is a keen fellow. There was a quiet, cynical smile on his face as he sat there beating a tattoo on his leggings with a hickory twig.

"Look at your brother," he exclaimed after a while. "I always told Tim that if he knew what was best he'd stay right here and——"

"If you told him that now, he would laugh at you," I interrupted.

Weston looked surprised.

"Does he like work?" he exclaimed.

"The boy is in love," I answered.

Weston dropped the hickory twig, and turning, gazed at me.

"I knew that," he said. "I knew that long ago."

"With Edith Parker," I hastened to explain. "You know her?"

"Oh—oh," he muttered.

He pulled out a cigar case and a box of matches and spent a long time getting a light.

Then with a glance of inquiry, he said, "Edith Parker?"

"Why, don't you know her?" I asked.

"I know a half a hundred Parkers," he replied. "I may know Edith Parker, but I can't recall her."

"This one is your book-keeper's daughter," I said with considerable heat.

"Indeed," said he calmly. "Parker—Parker—I thought our book-keeper's name was Smyth. Yes—I'm quite sure it's Smyth."

"But Tim says it's Parker," said I. "Tim ought to know."

"Tim should know," laughed Weston. "I guess he does know better than I. A minute ago I would have sworn it was Smyth; but to tell the truth, I never gave any attention to such details of business. Well, Edith is my book-keeper's daughter."

"She lives in Brooklyn," said I, "and she is very beautiful. Every letter I get from Tim, the more beautiful she becomes, for in all my life I never heard of a fellow as frank as he is. Usually men hide what sentiment they have except from a few women, but his letters make me blush when I read them."

"They are so full of gush," said Weston, calmly smoking.

He seemed very indifferent, and to be more listening to the cries of the dogs working around the hollow than to the affairs of the Hope family.

"Gush is the word for it," I answered. "Tim never gives me a line about himself. It's all Edith—Edith—Edith."

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"And he is engaged to Miss Smyth?" Weston struck his legging a sharp blow with his stick. "Confound it!" he cried, "I can't get it out of my head that our bookkeeper's name is Smyth."

"But Tim knows, surely," said I.

"Yes—he must," answered Weston. "Of course I'm wrong. But this Miss Parker—are they engaged?"

"I can't tell from his last letter," I replied. "It seems that they must be pretty near it—that's what Mary says, too."

Weston started. Then he rose to his feet very slowly, and wheeling about looked down on me and smoked.

"Mary says so too," he repeated. "How in the world does Mary know?"

"I read her the letter," said I, apologetically. It did seem wrong to read Tim's letter that way. From my standpoint it was all right now, but Weston did not know that, so he whistled softly to himself.

From the hollow came the long-drawn cry of the hound. It was old Captain. Betsy joined in, then Mike; and now the ridges rang with the music of the chase. They were on a fresh trail; they were away over hill and hollow, singing full-throated as they ran.

"They've found him," I cried, rising to hear the song of the hounds.

Weston sat down on the log.

"They are making for the other ridge," said I, pointing over the narrow gully. "Hark! There's young Colonel."

But Weston went on smoking. "Poor Tim!" I heard him say.

Full and strong rang the music of the dogs, as they swung out of the hollow, up the ridge-side. For a moment, in the clearing, I had a glimpse of them, Captain leading, with Betsy at his haunches, and Mike and Major nose and nose behind them. Far in the rear, but in the chase, was little Colonel. A grand puppy, he! All ears and feet. But he runs bravely through the tangled brush. Many a stouter dog comes from it with flanks all torn and bloody. I waved my hat wildly, cheering him on. I called to him loudly, in the vain hope he might look back, as though at a time like this a hound would turn from the trail. On he went into the woods—nose to the ground and body low—all feet and ears and a stout heart!

"Now we must wait," I said, "and watch and hope."

Already they had turned the crest of the hill, and fainter and fainter came the sound of the chase.

"Mark," Weston began, "I hope this affair of Tim's turns out all right. What little I can do shall be done, and to-night I'm going to write to the office that they must help him along. He deserves it."

"But the poorer men are the greater their love," I laughed. "With money to marry, Tim might think that after all he'd better look around more—take a choice."

"But Tim is the most serious person that ever was," returned Weston. "I have found that out. Once he makes up his mind, there is no changing it. He is full of ideas. He actually thinks that a man who is in business is doing something praiseworthy; that a man who has bought and sold merchandise at a profit all his life can fold his hands when he dies and say, 'I have not lived in vain.' He does not know yet that the larger estate a man leaves to his relatives the more useful his life has been. Now I suppose he hopes some day to be a tea-king. Perhaps he will. I hope so. I don't want the job. But once he has picked out his queen, you can't change him by making marriage a financial impossibility."

"Well, I'm certainly not protesting against your raising his salary," said I.

"You needn't. To tell the truth, it's too late. I wrote to the office about that yesterday."

It's of no use to thank Weston for anything. I tried to, but he brushed it aside airily and told me to attend to my own affairs and light one of his cigars. When we were smoking together his mood became more serious, and as he spoke of Tim and Tim's ambition, and of his interest in the boy, he was carried back to his own earlier life. So for the first time I came to understand his prolonged stay in the valley.

Like Elmer Spiker, in my heart Weston's conduct puzzled me. When he told me that he had come here simply because he liked the country I believed him that far, but I suspected some deeper reason to keep a man of his stamp dawdling in a remote valley. Now it was so simple. The foundation of Weston's fortunes had been laid in one small saloon; its bulk had been

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built on a chain stretching from end to end of the city. Its founder had been a coarse, uneducated man, but his success in the liquor trade had been too great to be forgotten, even years after he had abandoned it and built up the great commercial house that bore his name. His ambition for his son had been boundless. He had spared nothing to make him a better man in the world's eye than his father. He had succeeded. But the world had persisted in remembering the parental bar. Robert Weston had never seen that bar, for he had entered on the scene when there was a chain of them, and his father had brought him up in almost ignorance of their very existence. Even at the university he had little reason to be ashamed of them. It was after he had spent years in rounding out his education abroad, and had returned to take his place in those circles which he believed he was entitled to enter, that he found that the world persisted in pointing to the large revenue stamp that seemed to cling to him. A stronger man would have fought against odds like these, and won for himself a place that would suffer no denial. But Weston was physically a delicate man. By nature he was retiring, rather than aggressive. If those who were his equals would have none of him because of his father's faults, then he would not seek them. Equally distasteful were those who equalled him in wealth alone, for by a strange contradiction, the very fact that the rumshop did not jar on their sensibilities, marked them for him as coarse and uncongenial. Weston had turned to himself. It is the study of oneself that makes cynics. The study of others makes egotists. Then a woman had come. Of her Weston did not say much, except that she had made him turn from himself for a time to study her. He had become an egotist and so had dared to love her. She had loved him, he thought, for she said so, and promised to become his wife. Things were growing brighter. But they met an officious friend. They were in Venice at the time, he having joined her there with her family. The officious friend joined the family too, and he held up his hands in horror when he heard of it. Didn't the family know? Oh, yes, Bob was himself a fine fellow; but he was Whiskey Weston!

"Of course, no good woman wants to be Mrs. Whiskey Weston," said my friend grimly. "Still, I think she did care a bit for me; but it was all up. Back I came, and here I am, Mark, just kind of stopping to stretch my legs and rest a little and breathe. I came on a wheel, for I had ridden for miles and miles trying to get my mind back on myself the way it used to be."

Then he smoked.

"Is that the dogs again?" I said, to break the oppressive silence.

Weston did not heed me, but pointed down the valley to the house by the clump of oaks.

"Do you know sometimes I think that Mary there, with all her bringing up, would edge away from me if she knew that my father had kept saloons and gambling places and all that." Weston spoke carelessly, puffing at his cigar, for he had recovered his easy demeanor. "I think a world of Mary, Mark. She is beautiful and good and honest. Sometimes I suspect that I've stayed here just for her. Sometimes I think I will not leave till she goes——" Weston sprang to his feet suddenly. "It's the dogs! Hear them!" he cried.

I was up too. Away down the ridge we heard the bay of the hounds again.

"I want to tell you something," I said, pointing to the house by the clump of oaks. "I wish for your sake that there were two Marys, Weston. But there is only one, and she *is* good and beautiful, and for some reason—Heaven only knows why—she is going to be my wife."

Weston stepped back and gazed at me. I did not blame him. He seemed to study me from head to foot, and I knew that he was trying to find some reason why the girl should care for me. It was natural. I had puzzled over the same problem and I had not solved it. Now I did not care.

"Stare on," I cried, laughing. "You can't think it queerer than I do. It's hard for me to convince myself that it is true."

"I am glad," he said, taking my hand in a warm grasp. "It isn't strange at all, Mark, for Mary is a wise woman."

"There are the dogs," said I; "they are getting nearer."

"They are coming our way at last," he returned quietly. "But what's that to us when you are to be married? I wish you joy, and I shall be at the wedding, and it must be soon, too, and Tim shall be here."

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He was speaking very rapidly; his face was pale and his hand trembled in mine. "I'll send for him. Tim must have a holiday, and perhaps he'll bring Miss—Miss Smyth." Weston laughed. "Parker," he corrected. "He'll bring Miss Parker or Mrs. Tim."

Full and strong the bay of the hounds was ringing along the ridges. Nearer and nearer they were coming. Now I could hear old Captain's deep tones, and the shorter, sharper tongue of Betsy, Mike, and Major. The fox was keeping to the ridge-top and in a few minutes he would be sweeping by us. I pointed through the woods to a bit of clearing made by a charcoal burner. If he kept his course the fox would cross it, and that meant a clear shot. Weston knew the place, and without a word he picked up his gun and hurried through the woods.

Nearer and nearer came the hounds. The woods were ringing with their music, and the sound of the chase swung to and fro, from ridge to ridge. Now I could hear the crashing of the underbrush.

A shot rang out. Weston had fired.

My own gun sprang to my shoulder, but it was too late. The fox, seeing me, veered down the hill, and swept on to safety or to death, for six more anxious hunters were watching for him somewhere in those woods.

The dogs swept by, old Captain as ever leading, with Betsy at his haunches and Mike and Major neck and neck behind.

I watched for little Colonel. A minute passed and he did not come. Poor puppy! He had learned that to live was to suffer. Somewhere in these woods he must be lying, resting those ponderous paws and licking his bloody flanks.

The hollow was alive with the bay of dogs; the ridges were ringing with the echoes of a gunshot; but above them all I heard a plaintive wail over there in the charcoal clearing. I called for Weston and I got no answer, only the cry of the little hound. I called again and I got no answer. Through the bushes I tore as fast as my crutches would take me, calling as I ran and hearing only the wail of the puppy, till I broke from the cover into the open.

On his haunches, his slantwise eyes half closed, his head lifted high in the bright sunlight, sat little Colonel, wailing. He heard me call. He saw me. And when I reached him he was licking the white face of Whiskey Weston.

(To be continued.)

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THE SIGNED TUREEN

By Guy Wetmore Carryl

Illustrations by William Hurd Lawrence

AMOS HARTSHORN was dead. In all the sum total of history's vital statistics could be found, perhaps, no item less important. For it is a poor, small, and insignificant man, at best, whose passing from earthly activity does not entail a hint of meaning for some half-dozen of his kind, while those whose pulses quickened at the death of Amos Hartshorn numbered only two—Mary, his daughter and his friend, and Jeremy Burns, his rival and his enemy. In these two the emotions wakened by the thought of him as gone, were strikingly dissimilar, though equally intense. The one thought lovingly of what his life, the other of what his death, made possible.

The fishing village of Cliffport (which is not its name), now grown into a town, with a mayor, a chemical engine, a steam-roller, and an annual election, has been famous from time immemorial for its deep, reefless, and land-locked harbor. Thereby, in these last years, two local yacht-clubs have come to pass, to say nothing of a dozen or more hotels of a criminal hideousness, and multifarious summer residences, servilely and monotonously connatural in their architecture and their habits of stained shingles and enamel paint. The pretentious club-houses have flattened themselves against the steep shore of Cliffport Neck, spreading their over-adequate piazzas around them, like dowagers courtesying in hoops. Within, there are spacious living-rooms, and carpeted halls with giant fire-places, where the birch logs and the smoothly polished chunks of driftwood blaze and snap and crackle all summer long. From curtained doorways to left and right come the clicks of caroms, the tinkle of ice in tall glasses, the laughter of men, and the eloquent odors of tobacco, of mint, of lemons, and of every beverage in Christendom. Outside, smart little traps go trundling over the smooth, hard roads, to the tock-tock-tock-tock, tock-tock-tock-tock of chubby cobs, and the blue waters of the harbor are covered with yachts at anchor and with launches chug-chugging to and from the landing-stages. Of a sunny Sunday, too, you will see the slender, silent pleasure craft spread their cream-colored sails all in a moment and in unison, and, like seed-blown dandelions at a touch of breeze, go leaping and leaning together out to sea.

But back of all this, which is the froth of Cliffport, the old traditions hold, the old current flows sluggishly along. Between the trim and dainty yachts, gleaming with spotless paint and burnished brass-work, the smutty dories yet thread their way. On the blackened wharves, smelling evilly of tar and linseed-oil and fish, the patriarchs still sit among the coils of cordage and the heaps of rusty iron, tug at their pipes, swap yarns, stare sourly across the harbor to the Neck, and pass comments unfit for ears polite, upon the yachtsmen and the summer visitors. Further back in the town, where the older streets wind tortuously in and out, it is, for the most part, as if the invasion of the city people had never been. Here, all is gray, narrow, cramped, and falling—but with a certain dignity—into decay. Slats are missing from shutters, shutters from windows, and bars from balustrades. One more frequently perceives where paint has been than where it is. And, as children might pin tags upon some street beggar, grown old and blind, so the hands of passing bill-posters have contemptuously plastered these dingy and decrepit houses with notices of circuses and patent medicines, all heedless of the eloquence of the cloudy panes, so hauntingly like weak and dumbly appealing eyes, and the shabby doors, which seem to be gnarled and discolored hands, protesting in vain against such sacrilege. Gardens, once trim and cared-for, now run riot, the tall, attenuated hollyhocks and clumps of degenerating stocks and dahlias

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struggling hopelessly with the invading host of hardy weeds. Weather-beaten and neglected, the old houses stand a-row, their occupants, driven bit by bit from the rotting front rooms and upper stories, now making their last stand, in a kitchen, a shed, and a rear chamber or two, against the relentless inroads of poverty, age, and decay.

But as the people of an invaded country will oftentimes turn the coming of their conquerors and oppressors to profit, so some of the shrewder inhabitants of Cliffport find an opportunity in the presence of the vandals actually responsible for the gradual extermination of old-time conditions. These grim, pathetic dwellings, which housed a welfare long since fled, are made to feed their present owners upon their very vitals. Woodwork, crockery, glass, and pictures—little by little they all pass into the hands of the summer visitors, and, here and there in the town, a front window is animated by rows of blue and lilac plates, whale-oil lamps, and bits of pewter, and a little sign makes known the half-contemptible, half-piteous fact that one inside is contriving to maintain a semblance of prosperity by means of a traffic in the household gods of less fortunate neighbors.

Such a one was Jeremy Burns, "Dealer," as his card proclaimed him, "in Curios and Antiques." The large, well-conserved house which he inherited from his grandmother soon lost, under his unsentimental supervision, the cleanly if somewhat formal coziness which had entitled it to the name of home, and the rooms which in the old lady's lifetime, sparsely furnished as they were, had yet been negatively cheerful, were now unspeakably barren, albeit crowded to their utmost capacity with a miscellaneous collection which was half sheer rubbish and half veritable treasure-trove. He was no fool, Jeremy Burns. Harsh, unkempt, content to live in the smallest of his rooms and on the cheapest food, he had yet a knowledge of his business which would have done honor to a curator, and not only bought with a discriminating eye, but sold with consummate craft. Because his speech was that of Cliffport, drawling and characteristically profane, it did not follow that the intelligence which lay behind was proportionately inept. The men and women who came to the door of the big house on Atlantic Street were of two classes—those whom necessity drove thither, to part with a cherished pair of andirons, a teapot, or a print, and those whom a full purse and an empty hour led in quest of something of the kind. But whichever might be the motive of their errand, they had the wrong end of the bargain when they dealt with Jeremy Burns.

So, buying cheap and selling dear, at the end of twenty years he had amassed the vast, disorderly collection which now filled every room of his house. The walls of each were lined with side-boards, cabinets, and bureaus, and of these the drawers and shelves groaned with pewter, plate, and pottery. Every closet held its store of "blue"—Staffordshire, Nankin, Canton—teapots, plates, pitchers, and tureens, little handleless cups and saucers of soft Spode, and odd pieces of such odd sets as "The Beauties of America," "The Arms of the States," or "The Sports of Bacchus." The commoner specimens, such as the Wild Rose plates, the lustre, the Liverpool mugs and pitchers, were in full view; the rarer—the black Wedgewood, the Nantgawr, the Capo di Monte, and the Delft apothecary jars—were jealously hidden away, to be sprung dramatically upon the most promising of Jeremy's customers, when once their appetites had been whetted by more ordinary fare. And then—spinning-wheels, warming-pans, Grenadier andirons, furniture of every size and kind, pewter, candle moulds, scraps of carving, prints, old fabrics, bedspreads, samplers, spoons; and, in the midst of all, Jeremy himself, with his rusty hat and clothes, his small, sly eyes, and his thin, unshaven face; prowling, sorting, comparing, rearranging, gloating, and hastening noiselessly through the hall when the tinkle of the bell announced that another fly had sought the spider's door to buy or sell.

But above stairs was one room into which Jeremy's visitors were never shown. Within it, upon a huge mahogany table, was spread that which was chief of all his treasures and at once his pride and his despair—the Queen's-ware dinner-set of a hundred and forty-nine pieces, without a flaw, a crack, or a stain. It was the work of Enoch Wood the father, and worth—Jeremy did not dare to think how much it

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might be worth! Of soft cream color, tenderly and chastely decorated with little festoons of flowers, and bearing on each piece the device of its former owner, "A. V." in cipher, with a coronet above, the Queen's-ware set was something to delight and to illumine the collector's eye. When Jeremy thought of the amount he had paid to secure it, his blood ran chill; when he dwelt upon the price which, but for one consideration, he might well obtain for it, he gnawed his stubby moustache and snapped his fingers softly; when he reflected upon the obstacle which stood in the way of his bringing this vastly profitable sale to pass, he cursed the memory of Enoch Wood.

For "the father of pottery," be it understood, was of all men the most conservative. Top-high in the list of his achievements stood this self-same set, calculated to shatter the Tenth Commandment into imperceptible bits—this *chef d'œuvre* which had been ignobler if fashioned out of solid gold, this lovely assemblage of one hundred and fifty cream-white inspirations; but of these one bore his signature, and one alone. *One hundred and fifty pieces*—and Jeremy Burns was the exultant, the enraged, the desperate present owner of one hundred and forty-nine! Plates, platters, tea and coffee pots, gravy-boats, cups, saucers—all were there. The tureen alone was missing, the tureen which bore the all-essential signature of Enoch Wood; the tureen which, by its presence, would have proved the set authentic beyond the shadow of a doubt, and multiplied five-fold the value of its nameless fellows. And so, by ways perhaps too devious, we come to Amos Hartshorn.

For seven years Amos had owned the signed tureen. He alone, of the dozen dealers in antiques in Cliffport, could fairly be considered a business rival to Jeremy Burns; for while his stock was far smaller than the latter's—so small, indeed, that it had never outgrown one room—it made up in quality what it lacked in quantity. If its owner's circumstances had not compelled him to be a dealer, he must, infallibly, have been an *amateur*. Where Jeremy bought and sold with equal eagerness, best pleased with such objects as remained in his possession for the shortest space of time, Amos purchased with affection and vended with infinite regret. His eye was all for the beauty of the thing in which he dealt, and less than anything for the use or profit to which it was to be put. Jeremy bought wax flowers, and marble greyhounds reclining upon agate cushions, and cheap Swiss clocks—yes, and sold them, too, and often at a profit tidier than the average, for the two sufficient reasons that he bought this trash for a song and sold it to fools. But there were no marble greyhounds in the single wareroom of Amos Hartshorn. He bought as much, and sold as little, as he could afford, was poor his whole life long, while Jeremy's purse grew fatter yearly, and found ample compensation for every limitation and lack which this obedience to his conscience cost him, in even the temporary possession of the soft-toned old crockery which was the delight of his eye.

Among the treasures of which, in this manner, he was provisional custodian was one which, while it had cost him nothing, no money could have bought—the signed tureen. A codicil in the will of his oldest customer, grateful for his aid in the pursuit of her hobby, had fortuitously made it his, and when, later, at the sale of her collection, Jeremy had bought the remainder of the Queen's-ware set, it was only to find that the prime jewel, the keynote, the *summum bonum*, was already in the hands of his neighbor and rival. Mistaking his man for once in his life, he made a cash offer for the tureen upon the spot, and was met by one of Amos Hartshorn's rare flashes of anger, and a curt intimation that the article in question was not in the market on any terms whatever.

That was the beginning. Thenceforward, for seven years, the entire ingenuity of Jeremy Burns was focussed on the solution of one problem. By what threats, artifices, pleadings, and extravagant offers he sought to gain possession of the signed tureen, there is not space to say. In the end he fell to sending emissaries, or letters over signatures other than his own. Finally driven to desperation, he had gone for the last time in person, to bribe, bluster, browbeat, and even weep. Then Amos Hartshorn showed him the door, adding grimly, as they faced each other on the threshold:

"You'll never get it, Jeremy—not so long as *I* live. And if I can fix it—and I think I can—you won't get it when I'm gone."

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Whereupon the struggle had turned into a silent enmity, firm, but without rancor on the part of Amos, bitter, merciless, and savage on that of Jeremy. Even the latter's exultation in his constantly increasing trade and swelling profits was subordinate to his jealous satisfaction in the perception that his neighbor grew yearly more pinched and feeble, and his neighbor's customers more rare. Sometimes he gnawed his nails in a very fever of impotent impatience. Would the snapping-point, the moment of yielding, *never* come? Would the fingers of penury *never* sufficiently tighten? Peering from behind the wares in his window, his small eyes seemed to bore through the walls of the house opposite, to search out the signed tureen, to slay its protesting owner with a glance of venom, to bear it off in triumph, and to place it in the midst of its nameless and disinherited brothers in the chamber overhead. So seven years went by.

And now Amos Hartshorn was dead, and had been buried a full week in the hill cemetery overlooking the round, blue harbor. His daughter's few acquaintances having conscientiously snuffled an accompaniment to the funeral service, paused for a moment on the narrow sidewalk outside the house to ask each other what in land Mary Hartshorn would do now, and to sigh lugubriously, and then went their respective ways and ceased to wonder or to care. Day slowly followed day, and there was no external sign of life about the little house, wherein Mary sat stiffly upright, hour after hour, on the hair-cloth sofa, with her thin hands folded in her lap and her pale eyes staring straight before her into vacancy. She was waiting, blindly, hopelessly, for something to happen, something to divert her dulled attention for a moment from the thought that she was penniless, resourceless, and alone. And as she waited, over the way the seven years' avidity of Jeremy Burns surmounted his power of self-control, and casting diplomacy to the winds, he boldly crossed the street, and twirled the bell-knob in the centre of his departed rival's door. He was surprised to be asked into the parlor; surprised to find himself sitting opposite to Mary; surprised, most of all, at the sudden embarrassment which tied up his words into hard knots in his throat, and brought out the sweat in beads upon his forehead. Mary Hartshorn was looking at him steadily. A little spot of color burned like a wafer in the centre of each cheek, and twice she moistened her lips.

"You sent him a wreath," she said at last.

"Yes," said Jeremy.

In truth, his awkwardness had suggested no better way of winning the girl's favor than this, the most inauspicious, had he but known it, for the attainment of his purpose.

"I'm glad you liked it," he added heavily.

"You are mistaken," answered Mary. "I did *not* like it. I—I threw it away. Why should you send a wreath to—to him? You've been his open enemy for years. Why should *you* send him a wreath?"

Jeremy found no reply.

"I think I can tell you why you have come here to-day," continued the girl resolutely. "You're after the tureen—isn't that it? You think that it will be easy for you to get it, now that he's gone. At least, be frank about it. Am I right?"

"I'm perpared to make you a lib'ral offer f'r all your father's stock," replied Jeremy, discovering his tongue, "an' the t'reen—of *course*, the t'reen. W'y not? You can't have any use f'r it now, an' you need money. There's no use in beatin' roun' the bush, is there? Come!—shall we say two hunderd f'r the lot? Mind you, I don' even as' t' see w'at you've got. I'll take the chanct of a loss. Now then—two hunderd?—cash?"

"No," said Mary Hartshorn.

"Well then—three!" said Jeremy the Blind. "But not a red cent more, not a red cent. It's a han'some offer, Merry. *You* know that! There can't be much lef', an' I stan' t' lose. But I'm as gen'rous as the nex' man, w'en it comes t' that, an' w'at's pas' is pas'. Bygones is bygones. I want the t'reen, of course; I don' deny that. An' there's no reason w'y I shouldn' *have* it, I expec', s'long as I play fair. An' I *am* playin' fair, Merry! Come now—three hunderd—w'at?"

Mary rose, with an unconscious dignity.

"*I* shouldn't care to be shown the same door twice," she said; "but it seems that some folks are not so particular. Will you go, please, Mr. Burns—and not come again?"

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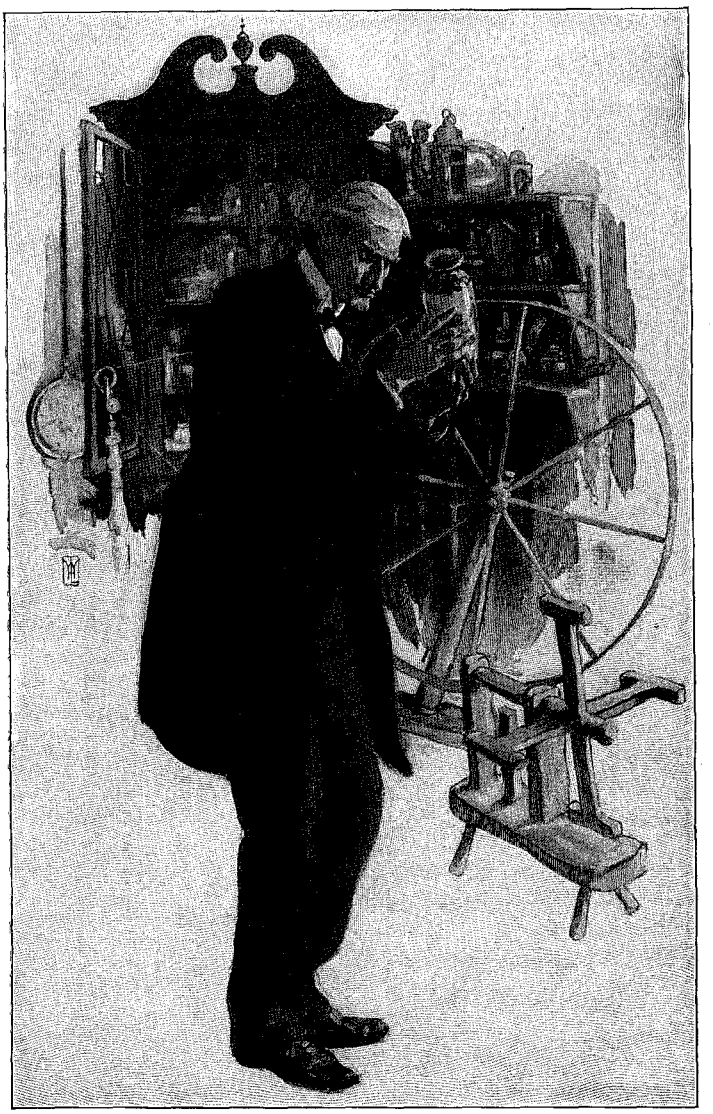

Jeremy . . . prowling, sorting, comparing, rearranging.—Page 222.

Jeremy's thin face flushed wrathfully.

"D'you mean," he demanded, "that I *can't* have the t'reen?"

"Never!" exclaimed the girl. "Never—never—never! *Now* do you understand—and will you go?"

"You're a fool!" said Jeremy. The which, no doubt, she was.

For a half-hour she sat where he had left her, her face hidden in her hands. Over and over again, the interview just past came back to her, insisting, with a kind of stubborn eloquence, upon her bitter necessity, and the chance of relieving it which she had thrown away. But always, as a solace and accompaniment in one, returned her father's pale face, as she had seen it in those last, heart-rending hours of hopeless vigil, and his feeble, oft-reiterated words:

"Remember your God, my daughter, and remember your honest pride. They'll bring you through, my dear; they'll bring you through, whatever happens."

Her God? Where was He, behind this cold, clear, beautiful, unsympathetic sky of the Massachusetts coast? It was easy to

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say "Remember," but, in these hours of her affliction and her need, it was so much easier to forget! Her pride? What had it just done for her, if not to push aside the hope of a relief which, if temporary, was at least substantial? No sympathy from above had held back this, the earliest of her solitary sacrifices. It had come surely and swiftly, treading hard upon the heels of her bereavement. But she had done right! This perception, in all its stern, severe simplicity and beauty, leaped at her out of the chaos of her thoughts. *Right!* Merciless master though it be, the word compensates for much in Massachusetts towns. So, presently, she took heart of grace, found words, and framed a prayer.

Impious as the naked thought would have appeared to her, it was almost to her father that she prayed. It could hardly have been otherwise. This grave, silent, gentle man, who had so lately left her that, in these rooms, his presence seemed yet to live and move, had been the most constant of companions, the kindest of teachers, the tenderest of guardians. He fulfilled at every point the requirements which the girl's simple yet strict standards taught her to expect of paternity. It was well-nigh impossible for her mind, destitute of imagination, and untouched by any remotest hint of theology, to conceive a higher type. It might be said, without irreverence, that for his daughter, Amos Hartshorn had made God in his own image.

In the narrow street the lengthening shadows proclaimed late afternoon when Mary suddenly raised her head. For the second time that day the door-bell had smitten the silence with its discordant clang. She touched her hair and smoothed her black skirt instinctively before answering the summons.

The visitor was a stranger to her, a man of middle age, smooth-shaven, simply dressed, and with the better part of his kindly smile in his clear blue eyes. He removed his hat as she opened the door, and bowed with old-fashioned formality.

"May I see your china?"

For an instant she was on the threshold of refusal. The room which held the little collection had been closed since the first days of her father's illness. Her heart smote her at the thought of invading this sanctuary, instinct with so many memories. But her need was instant, and necessity stood face to face with sentiment and had the upper hand. She led the way in silence, turning only as they were entering the room.

"It is usually more orderly," she said, a little unevenly, "but there has been illness —death."

"I am very sorry," said her visitor, simply. "If I had known I would not have ventured to intrude. I trust it was not your father?"

The girl's eyes widened, without meeting those of her questioner.

"Yes," she said. "He died last week."

"I am very sorry," repeated the other. "We were friends, I think: I should have been proud to call him one. He did me many favors, and I've made him many visits, though I've never happened to meet you before, have I? He was a good man."

He adjusted a pair of gold-rimmed glasses, and drew a card from his case.

"That is my name," he added. "You may have heard your father speak of me."

Nathan Hapgood. Yes, Mary remembered. This was the great merchant prince of Boston, whose house at Colchester was the proudest on all the proud North Shore. There were letters from him, even now, in Amos Hartshorn's little desk upstairs, and Mary recalled her father's many searches for rare plates and pitchers which his millionaire customer desired, his joy when these quests were crowned with success, his chagrin when he was unable to carry out the commission entrusted to him. Favors? Yes, perhaps they had been favors. If so, they had been more than liberally repaid.

"Yes," she said, "my father often spoke of you. Perhaps you know that he admired you. I am glad you came. He would have been pleased, and proud to show you what he had. He—will you wait a moment, sir? I'll fetch a light. It is growing dark in-doors."

Left to himself, Nathan Hapgood bit his lip. He was no poet, no painter, seeking for "atmosphere" or "color," but he was more—the employer of many men, of many women, whose long experience of their hopes and disappointments, their pretensions and their shortcomings, their efforts and their failures, had given his perception that sense of the imminent which lies in the antennæ of the butterfly. There was no

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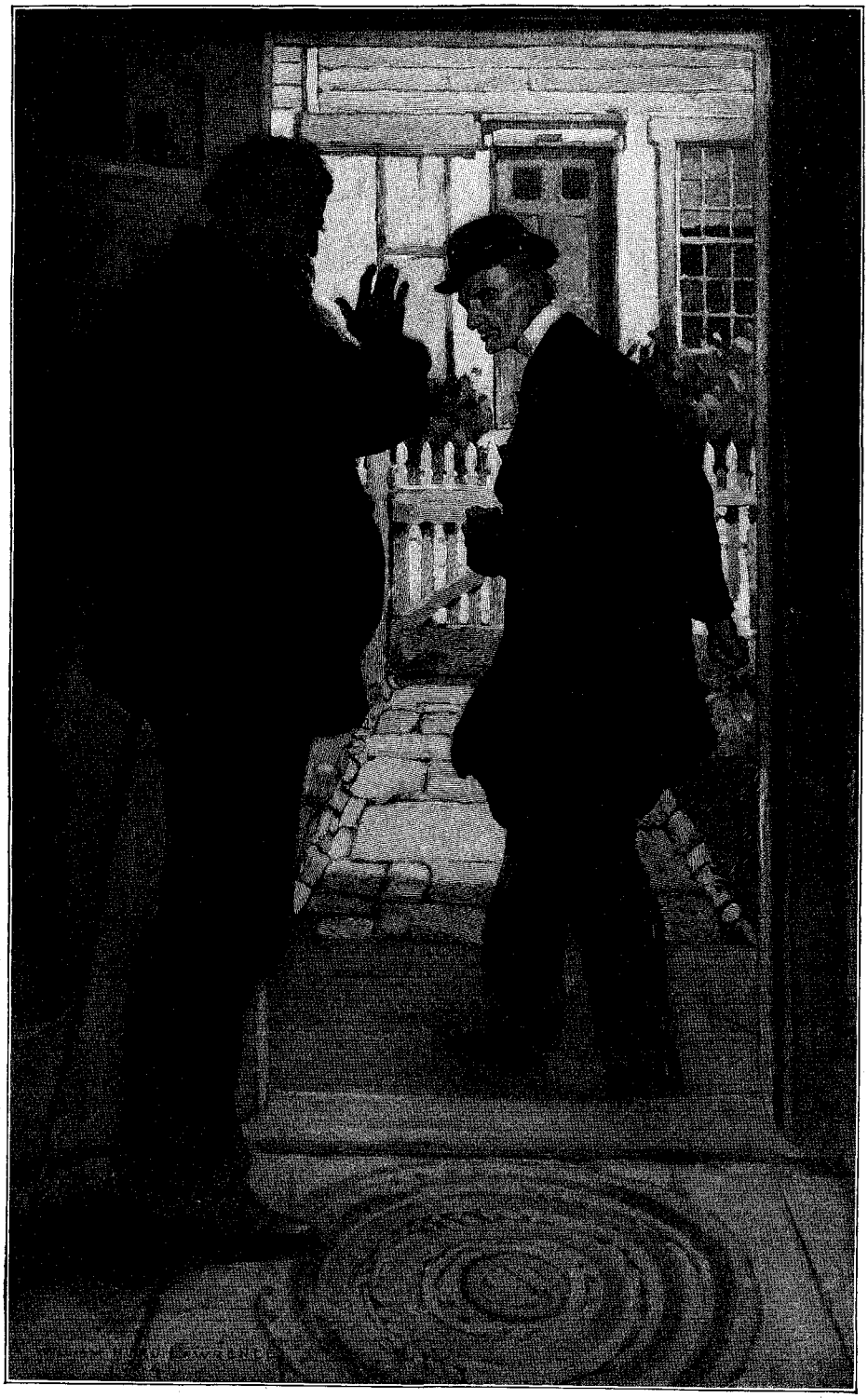

Drawn by W. H. Lawrence.

"You'll never get it, Jeremy—not so long as *I* live."—Page 223.

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need to tell him what lay behind the hesitating speech and the averted eyes of Mary Hartshorn.

"This morning's *Herald*," he said to himself, "informed me of a massacre in Russia, of an impending revolution in Bulgaria, of a lynching in the South. But the *little* tragedies of life—the *little* ones! Heigho!"

When Mary returned he was already examining the signed tureen.

"This is a valuable piece," he observed, with that generous candor of appreciation which distinguishes the true collector from the mere hunter after bargains. "I am surprised to find it here. Such things are commonly snapped up at once: and if I am not mistaken, Jeremy Burns has the rest of the set. I remember he bought it at the Kassett sale. I should have thought——"

Mary set the lamp she had brought, upon a table in the window.

"Mr. Burns has made many offers for it," she said, "but it was not—is not for sale. It was a gift to my father from an old friend, and he valued it very greatly."

"Ah," said Mr. Hapgood, nodding his head slowly and stroking his chin. "I am disappointed. I had quite made up my mind to carry it away with me. Let me see—it's Miss Hartshorn, isn't it? You're not married?"

"No," said Mary. She had taken a little square of thin silk from a drawer, and was dusting the crockery nearest to her. It was the instinctive solicitude of one who loved rather than labored under a charge, and perhaps an outlet for her embarrassment, as well. Mr. Hapgood observed her narrowly, saw her turn a bit of copper lustre obliquely toward the lamp, to catch the hint of iridescence on its polished side, and smiled quietly, with the sympathy of understanding.

"You are fond of china?" he asked.

"Very," answered the girl. "My father liked to teach me, and it was a great pleasure to learn. I know something of every piece here. They seem like old friends, all of them. That's the worst of being a dealer, my father used to say—it's so hard to part with the things you've grown to love."

"Precisely," agreed Mr. Hapgood, with an interested nod. "I should have exactly the same feeling. I've one of the largest collections in the country, you know, and some very fine examples. I've over forty of the Syntax plates."

"All different?" exclaimed Mary.

"All different!" said Mr. Hapgood, rubbing his hands. "I see you know! Yes, I've over two thousand pieces in all—almost enough to keep one person busy with the care of them——"

He suddenly fell silent, turning a pitcher of Beach-ware over and over in his large, firm hands. When, as now, he fingered an article without looking at it, and nibbled behind his lips, they were wont to say in the offices of the big Boston store that "the Old Man had a new idea." It was quite unnecessary to add that the new idea would be worth while.

Presently Mary Hartshorn turned from her dusting, came close to him, and nerved herself to speak, holding her arms rigidly at her sides and her thin fingers clenched.

"I'll sell you the tureen, Mr. Hapgood, if you like. It seems, somehow, as if he wouldn't mind your having it, perhaps. And I—and I need the money, sir. He didn't—leave—he didn't leave very much, you see."

Mr. Hapgood's whole face went kindlier at the words.

"My poor little friend," he said, "I'll gladly take the tureen. But afterward—what then? What are you going to do?"

"I thought of staying," faltered Mary; "of staying right here, and carrying on the business. Do you think I could? Do you think I could make a success of it?"

Mr. Hapgood glanced about him. In all, there were not more than fifty pieces of crockery in the room, and the dwindling sources of supply—the long searches, often fruitless—the journeys, the bargainings, the rebuffs, the disappointments—above all, Jeremy Burns in the house opposite, with his vast stock, and his skill, and his rapacity, for an immediate competitor. . .

"Miss Hartshorn," he said, "I've the biggest kind of a house over in Colchester yonder, and an old housekeeper that you can't help loving from the first minute you clap eyes on her. And I've a collection of china that needs to be rearranged, and catalogued, and looked after like a baby. Suppose you come and do it. Mrs. Wreath will find you a room, and if the china doesn't keep you busy, there'll be other ways in plenty of helping her, never fear.

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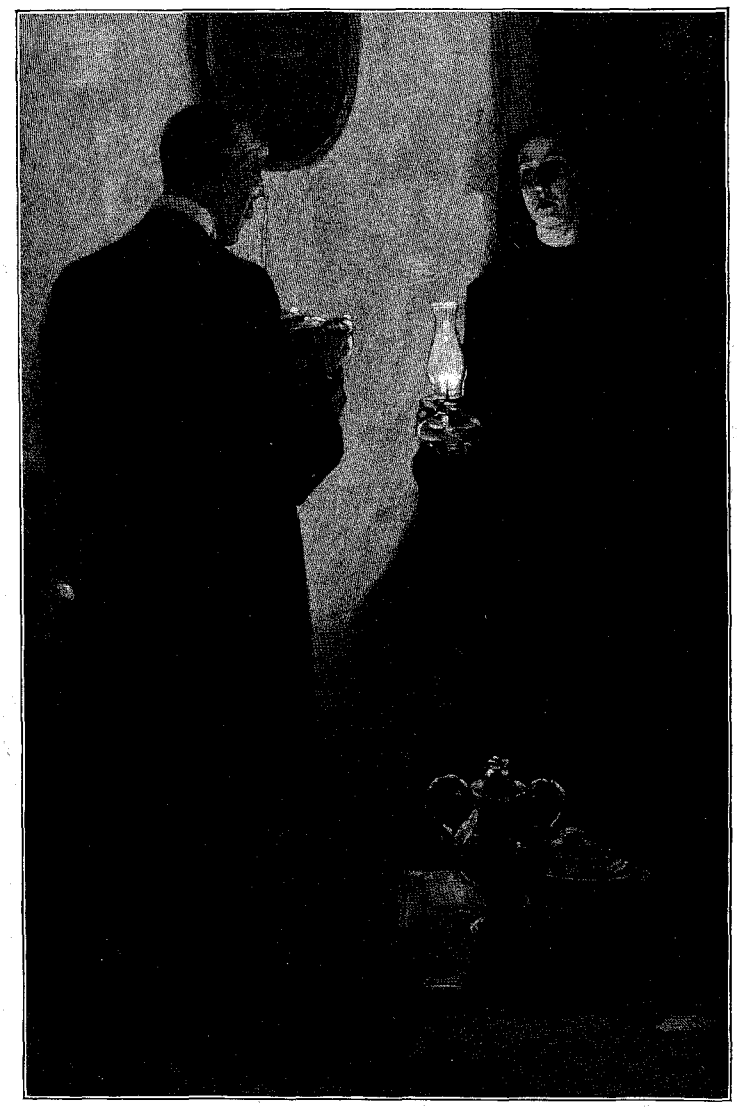

"This is a valuable piece," he observed.—Page 228.

And I'll be glad to pay you a fair salary—nothing enormous, you understand, but more—more than I think you are likely to make here, my dear."

Mary had drawn back a step as he was speaking, raising her hands and clasping them upon her breast.

"Oh, you are kind, sir!" she answered, just above a whisper; "you are very, very kind! But I think I couldn't do that; I couldn't do that just now, Mr. Hapgood. It would seem to me like deserting all this"—she made a little gesture to comprehend the room—"all this that he loved and was so proud of. I think I ought to make the attempt. I ought at least to try. But thank you, just the same, sir—thank you!"

She turned away, battling with the tears that strove to come.

"As you will," said Mr. Hapgood, after a moment. "We'll leave the offer open. A letter to Colchester will reach me at any time, and if you find that you can't—that it doesn't work, Miss Hartshorn, you'll write, won't you?"

Mary nodded. She could not trust herself to speak.

"And I'll take the tureen with me," he

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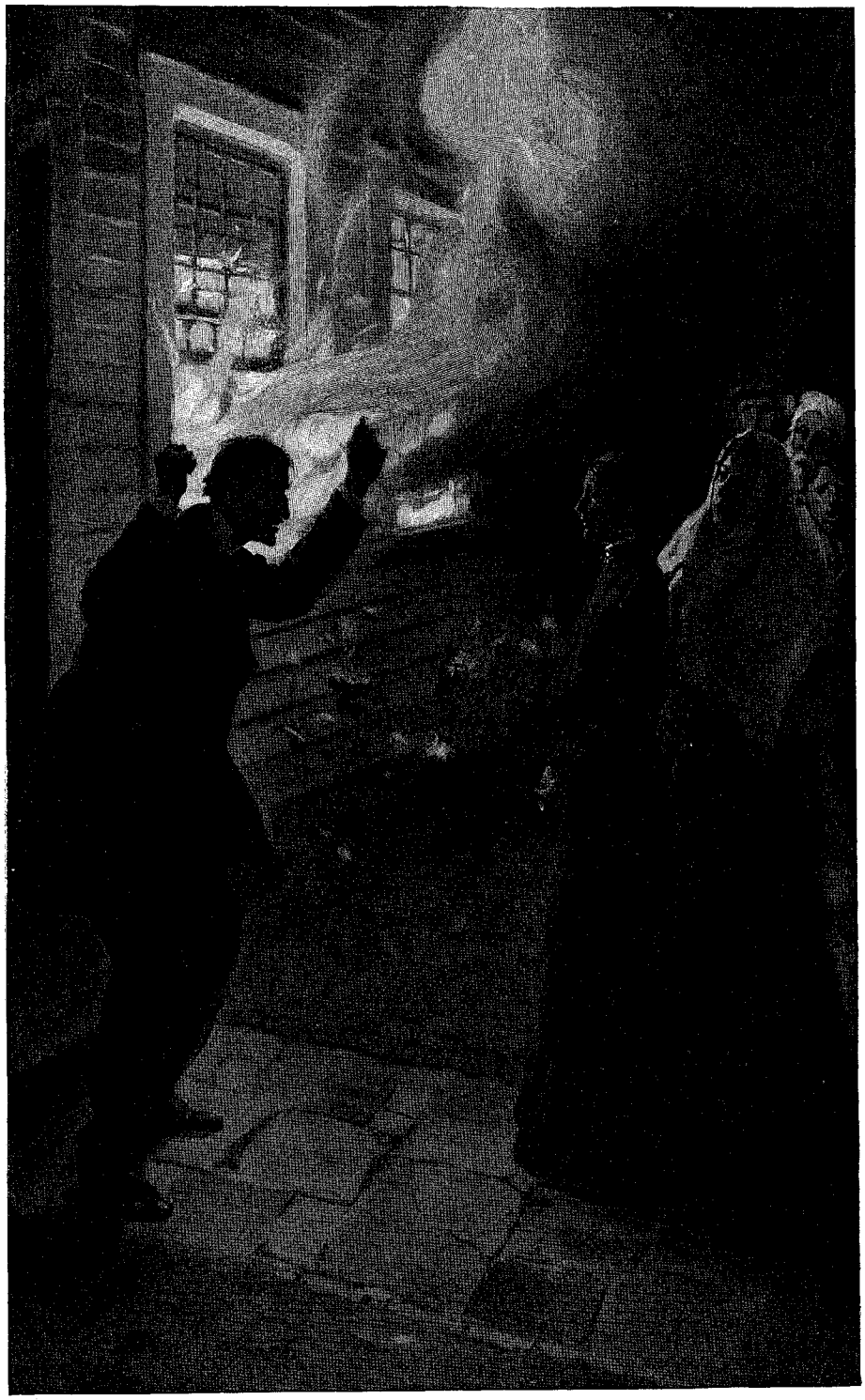

Drawn by W. H. Lawrence.

"I can't get in—I tried four times. An' the t'reen! Oh, my God—my God!—the t'reen!"—Page 231.

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added more briskly. "I don't like to lose sight of a treasure, once I've found it. I'm spending the night with a friend in town, so it's quite convenient. There's a hundred dollars—not a word, young lady! I know the value of this kind of thing better than you, I fancy. And now, good-by. A promise is a promise, remember. I shall fully expect to hear from you in case you change your mind."

He was gone before she found words to answer him, carrying the signed tureen in his arms as tenderly as the shepherd bears the lamb. The girl was smiling through her tears as she went slowly up the stairs.

Outside, the short October day was already at an end. Darkness fell abruptly, and lighted windows multiplied along the narrow street. A stiff, crisp wind blew in from the sea, paused at the half-open window of the Hartshorn house, and entered, tentatively at first, and then more boldly. The stolid china and mahogany furniture received this intruder with rigid formality. Only two things stirred at his coming—the flighty dimity curtain, which went into ecstasies at his impetuous attentions, and the flame of the little lamp on the table, a foot away.

Ten minutes later, Jeremy Burns came out upon the steps of his house, locked the door carefully behind him, turned, paused for a moment, with his head thrust forward and his eyes protruding like green marbles, and then, with a roar, plunged madly across the street, and began to thunder with his fists upon the Hartshorn door. Mary was roused from the deep revery into which she had fallen, in her room above, by the stupendous clamor of his pounding and his cries—roused to a heart-startling sensation of calamity. The air was hot and pungent. As she lifted her head to listen, it suddenly stung her eyes, and when she flung open the door of her chamber it was to find the hall and stairway white with dense clouds of smoke. Reeling and choking, she fought her way downward and out, perceiving only, as she passed the warehouse door, that the heat became scorching, and that little tongues of red and yellow danced in the thick haze. Then her fingers closed on the knob of the street-door, and turned it. A great, cold inrush of pure air met her like the arms of a friend, and the next instant she was in the street.

The crowd had gathered in a breath. Her neighbors flocked about her, proffering sympathy, aid, and shelter. In the near distances swelled the bell of the chemical engine, driven headlong, and the voices of men clamoring to clear the way. But above these sounds rose another, something midway between a shout and a bark, and Jeremy Burns, gasping, smoke-blinded, groping before him, came lunging toward her.

"The whole room's ablaze!" he screamed, pummelling the air grotesquely with his blackened fists. "I can't get in—I tried four times. An' the t'reen—the t'reen! Oh, my God—my God!—the t'reen!"

"Never mind that, Mr. Burns," broke in Mary, uncertain whether to laugh or cry. "The tureen's not there. I sold it this afternoon."

For a moment Jeremy was stricken dumb by the words, and stood blinking at her out of his smoke-reddened eyes, his raised hands closing and unclosing like swimming starfish. Then he drew himself up stiffly.

"You sol' the t'reen?" he said slowly. "*An' t' think I've jest saved your life!*"

. . . . . .

"It does beat all," said kindly Mrs. Tapley, as she led Mary home with her, when at last the house was a heap of ruins, "how he come t' think o' chany at sech a time—an' you losin' house an' home. The good Lord o'ny knows w'at you'll do *now*, Mary. W'ere's your hankcher, child? Ef y' ain't got the *smoochiest* nose!"

Groping in her pocket, Mary's fingers closed upon a card, and she drew it out and read it, as they passed a lighted window. Then she smiled.

"I'll write to-night," she whispered.

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Drawn by F. C. Yohn.

Her lover was beside her and was suggesting that he escort her home.—Page 237.

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THE UNDERCURRENT

BY ROBERT GRANT

ILLUSTRATION BY F. C. YOHN

XXI

IN saying to Constance that he had pondered the question of their marriage from her standpoint, Gordon Perry felt that he had given indeed the fullest weight to every legitimate scruple, and believed that, provided he was beloved, there was no substance in any one of them. He knew that Constance had shrunk from a divorce. What more natural so long as she was undisturbed by her deserting husband? But now that the element of a new, strong affection was introduced, the necessary legal proceedings seemed a paltry bar to her happiness. He had expected that she would demur to the step at first, but he had felt confident that her acute sense would shortly convince her that she was divorced to all intents and purposes already, and that the mere formal adjudication of the fact, however unpleasant sentimentally, was not a valid obstacle. He had also appreciated that this repugnance to a legal dissolution of the marriage tie for the purpose of becoming a second time a wife would be accompanied by with an instinctive feminine aversion to giving her person to another man while it was still possible to encounter the original husband in the flesh. He did not pride himself on his knowledge of women, but the attitude suggested itself to him as possible, even probable, in the case of one whose sensibilities were so delicate as hers, for the reason that there lingered in his mind the remembrance of shrinking words both in books and in real life by other women when the same topic had been broached in the past. Consequently it was a relief to him that Constance did not openly manifest this form of repugnance, and he radiantly jumped to the conclusion that her love for him was so reciprocal and mastering that false delicacy had been shrivelled up as in a furnace. Was not such a process in keeping with her sterling sanity and intelligence? For a moment he had jubilantly assumed that all was won, since, after conscientious if somewhat scornful analysis of the Church's claim, he had already decided that the pure religious objection would never in the end avail to keep them apart. Nor did the foreboding definiteness of her opposition discourage him appreciably. It merely cast a damper on his hopes for an immediate surrender, and indicated to him that he had been premature in supposing that she had been able to purge herself of superstitions and conventional prejudices forthwith. It could simply be a question of time when so human and discerning a bride would come to his arms without a qualm.

Nevertheless he felt that he must convince her. Now that he was sure she loved him, the possibility of losing her was not even to be entertained; but he wished her to succumb as the result of agreement, and not in spite of herself, both because he realized that she would not be happy otherwise, and because the doctrine which she had invoked as a binding obligation jarred not only with his desires, but with his deepest opinions. Therefore, at the conclusion of their interview, he took up straightway the cudgels of thought in defence of his convictions against what

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seemed to him the essential injustice and unreasonableness of the Church's claim. This necessarily involved fresh consideration of that claim itself. That night before he went to bed he rehearsed the arguments by which he purposed to appeal to her. Did she not appreciate that they were influenced by no base motives? That neither lust nor undue haste, nor covetous trifling with the feelings of others tarnished their mutual passion? Theirs was no case of putting off the old bonds of matrimony in order to be on with the new, but one where love had been starved to death, and been born again by gradual and chaste processes in a lonely, forsaken heart. What could be wrong in such a union? And were not their own consciences and their own intelligences the only fit judges of the eternal merits?

Gordon Perry's attitude toward religion —toward churches and toward churchmen —was abstractly respectful and friendly. He had been brought up by his mother in her faith, and the period of stress through which most young men pass in early life had been productive of a frame of mind which was reverent as well as critical. Not a small portion of mankind in Benham accepted their religious doctrine on trust, as they did their drinking water. Either they were too busy to question what seemed authority, or that particular compartment of the brain where absorbing interest in the unseen germinates was empty. Some of the most pious never reasoned, and their docile worship constituted the cement in the walls of dogma. Again, there was a class—a growing class in Benham as elsewhere—composed of well-equipped, active-minded men who were polite to Religion if they met her in the street and would even go to church now and again to oblige a wife or preserve outward appearances, for they were still of the opinion that religion is good for the masses. But in their secret souls what did they believe?

Gordon belonged to still another class. Religions truth had an absorbing interest for him, but what was religious truth? Different sects—and they were manifold in Benham—told him different things, and each sect proclaimed its doctrine insistently as vital, if not to salvation, to the highest spiritual development. Like many a young man before him he argued that all could not be right, and as a result he presently found himself a member of that secret society of able-bodied, able-minded male citizens—the largest class of all—who reasoned about religious doctrine somewhat in this way: That they were hopefully looking forward to the time when the controversial differences which divided the sects into rival camps should disappear; and that until then they and their successors, whose number was sure to be legion, would turn deaf ears to the clashing of the divines, and attend church in order to gain strength and inspiration to play their parts well in complex modern human society, ignoring all else but the spirit of Christian love. If it be said that they and Gordon were not strong on dogma, denied that the laws of the universe had ever been suspended to produce fear or admiration in man, because to believe the contrary seemed to be an insult to God, and looked askance at certain other extraordinary phenomena to which the orthodox cling, it should also be stated that they and he were heartily in sympathy with every effort of all the clergy to improve human nature along intelligent lines, to help the poor to help themselves, to prevent the rich from misappropriating the earth, and to foster truth, courage, unselfishness and refinement in the name of religion. Therefore it happened that Gordon was apt to take with a grain of salt what he heard in the pulpit; and now and then he would play golf on Sunday if he were in need of fresh air for his soul; but although he was slightly impatient of clerical sophistries up town, down town he lent a ready hand in the active reforms of the city, in the furtherance of which he had learned to know well, and to admire as good fellows, half a dozen energetic, enthusiastic clergymen. Was not religion one of the great forces of the world? Because one could not believe everything, and revolted at mystical or puerile superstitions, were the highest cravings of one's nature to be allowed to atrophy? So, just as in his social perplexities, he had sought refuge in practical service from the conflict of theories, and on more than one occasion he had been agreeably surprised by the confidential admission of the divines with whom he was co-operating that their and his views were not essentially far apart. Gor-

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don was glad on their account to hear so, and was only the more convinced as a consequence that it was difficult to reconcile most of the strict tenets of theology with the modern ideas of wide-awake, enlightened laymen concerning the workings of the universe or the best social development of the creature man.

Gordon made no attempt to see Constance on the day following his proposal. Impatient as he was to renew his suit, he concluded to let her muse for twenty-four hours on the situation. It occurred to him that he would ask leave to accompany her to church on Sunday morning, but reflecting that it would not be fair to disturb her meditations, he decided instead to attend the service at St. Stephen's and walk home with her after it. Whatever the New Testament language on the subject, would she be able to convince herself that the sundering of such love as theirs would be in keeping with the true spirit of Christianity? It seemed to him that there could be but one answer to this proposition, and as he walked along in the beautiful bracing atmosphere of the autumn day his step was buoyant, for he believed that his happiness would be sealed within a few short hours. Ecstasy ruled his thoughts. Was not the woman of his heart an entrancing prize? Fortune and station she had none, but far more important for him, she was lovable and she was lovely; she was intelligent and she was good.

He had attended service at St. Stephen's once or twice before, and had a bowing acquaintance with Mr. Prentiss; but he knew well and entertained a cordial liking for the latter's assistant, the rector of the Church of the Redeemer, the mission church in the squalid section of the city supported by the larger establishment. St. Stephen's, as the fashionable Episcopalian church of the community, was apt to draw a large congregation, especially when the pew owners were not confronted by wet skies or sidewalks. This brilliant Sunday at the beginning of the social season had drawn most of the regular congregation and also a large contingent of strangers—chiefly women—some of them visitors in Benham, but the majority students and other temporary residents who found the æsthetic music and devotional ritual of St. Stephen's stimulating. Gordon, who was a little late, obtained a seat in the gallery. It had occurred to him that he would be more likely to catch sight of his ladylove from this eminence than if he remained below. His eyes sought at once the so-called free benches where she was accustomed to sit, but she was not in her usual place. After repeated scrutiny of the rows of faces had convinced him of this, he concluded dejectedly that she had not come. Perhaps she had stayed at home hoping he would call. Or had she been loth to display her glasses in public before she had become accustomed to the disfigurement? His glance wandered over the rich flower garden of autumn bonnets, but to no purpose. While in perplexity he reviewed the probable causes of her absence he became aware that the music of the processional had ceased and that Mr. Prentiss was speaking. Ten minutes later, when the congregation rose to take part in the selection from the Psalms, his glance fell on Mrs. Randolph Wilson in one of the front pews. Her profile was almost in a line with his vision. While he looked his heart gave a bound, for he suddenly recognized that the young woman next to her in the gay, attractive bonnet was she for the sight of whom his soul was yearning.

After leaving Constance on the day of their eventful interview, Mrs. Wilson had conceived the plan of presenting her with a new bonnet and jacket. These she brought with her to Lincoln Chambers a little before church time, and placed with her own hands on the surprised recipient. Pleased at the æsthetic progress of her ward, she seized this opportunity to promote it, and also to cater to her own generous instincts at a time when to indulge them was not likely to cause offence. Though astonished, Constance accepted without demur these welcome additions to her toilet, and the donor had the satisfaction of beholding how admirably they became her. Besides, Mrs. Wilson had on the tip of her tongue and was eager to communicate the plan which she had been working out since they separated, and which she imparted to Constance as soon as they were in her brougham on the way to church.

"I have been carefully considering your affairs, my dear, and, in the first place,

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you are to do nothing for the next six months but get well. I shall insist upon looking after you. You promised me, remember." She paused as though she half expected to encounter opposition to this project, and, though her ward revealed no insubordination, she added the argument which she held in reserve: "For having deprived you by its counsel of the means of support, it is the Church's duty, and my privilege as a disciple of the Church's cause, to watch over you until you are able to provide for yourself. At the end of the six months, when your eyes are strong again, I wish you to become my private secretary."

On the way from her house she had pictured to herself the astonishment and delight which such an unexpected and splendid proposition must necessarily inspire, and she could not refrain from stealing a sidelong glance at Constance in order to observe the effect it would have on her.

"Your private secretary?"

Mrs. Wilson felt rewarded by the incredulous bewilderment conveyed by the interrogatory, and hastened to explain her benefaction. "It seems almost the interposition of Providence in your behalf," she added. "Last evening—and I was thinking of your noble resolution at the time—my secretary came in to inform me that she was engaged to be married, and to ask me to be on the lookout for someone else. 'The very place for Constance Stuart,' I said to myself at once. 'What could suit her better? And what an admirable arrangement it will be for me.' For after refusing Mr. Perry's offer, I take for granted that, even when your eyesight is restored, the continuance of your present business relations would be out of the question."

"Oh, yes, entirely so," answered Constance with rueful promptness. "I could not continue in his employment; we should both be unhappy." She was making a confession of what she had been saying to herself all the morning.

"Exactly." Mrs. Wilson beamed over the success of her divination.

"Then we will consider it settled. And I wish to tell you besides that I shall take it upon myself to see that your boy's artistic gift is given full opportunity for expression, and your daughter thoroughly educated. Your salary, I mean, will be sufficient to enable you to give them proper advantages, for I can see that you will be very useful to me."

She was determined to make plain that virtue in this case was to be its own reward, and that the material losses in the wake of renunciation were rapidly being eliminated. At the same time she wished to conceal a too obviously eleemosynary intent.

"I don't see how anything could be nicer for me. And if you think that I should suit—that I could perform the duties properly—I shall be thankful for the position," answered poor Constance.

She had passed another sleepless night. Fixed as was her conviction that separation from her lover was inevitable, she felt deeply sorry for him if not for herself, and dreaded the impending final interview between them. Despite her spiritual exaltation, the consciousness that she was letting slip a great chance for her children still haunted her, in that the future by comparison seemed vague and forbidding. For it had been clear to her from the moment of her decision that under no consideration could she remain in Gordon's office. Therefore, though doubtless her friends would help her, the struggle for a livelihood must be begun again.

Mrs. Wilson's amazing, timely offer lifted a great weight from her heart; by it the question of her future employment was disposed of, and disposed of in a way more congenial to her than any she could have imagined possible. It did indeed seem providential that the vacancy should have occurred at this time, and she realized that the certainty that her children would be protected would nerve her for the necessary ordeal of parting, for now there was only selfishness in her desire for marriage. She longed for it to be over with that she might put away once and forever this great temptation.

The thought that Gordon would probably come for his answer that afternoon was uppermost in her mind during the service; but she was in a mood to respond to the beautiful music, and before Mr. Prentiss gave out the text of the sermon she was already thrilling with the joy of her sacrifice on the altar of faith. She prayed that

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she might be granted strength to renounce this seeming blessing ungrudgingly and to close her ears to the whispers of regret, and as she joined in the jubilant anthem of rejoicing for a risen Lord it seemed to her that the angel of peace brushed her forehead with the wings of heaven's love. The text was, "Except a man be born again he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." It was a sermon of immortality and hope, and a sermon of the triumph of the spirit over the flesh for the sake of a Christ who had set the great example and conquered self through suffering. It was one of Mr. Prentiss's most happy efforts from the standpoint of orthodoxy—graphic, eloquent and practical. He set no narrow limits of a creed as the arbiter of truth, but declared that the opportunity to choose between the path of righteousness and the path of self-sufficiency or self-indulgence was offered to every one in the great struggle of modern life; that he who would follow the blessed Lord and Master must shun as evil that which was injurious to the highest interests of human society and thus hateful to God. As she listened Constance could not doubt that he had her in mind. It seemed to her that more than once his glance rested on her encouragingly and fondly. Her brain was transported with ecstasy and zeal. Her opportunity was at hand, and she would serve Christ and mankind faithfully.

Leaving the church under the spell of the sermon, she became suddenly aware that her lover was beside her and was suggesting that he escort her home. At sight of him her chaperone, scenting danger, led the way sedulously toward the brougham, but in the interval Constance decided to take him at his word. Would it not be the simplest course to explain to him quietly on the street that what he asked her was impossible, and thus avoid the pain of a more intimate parting? Therefore she made her excuses to Mrs. Wilson, pleading the radiance of the day and her need of fresh air. She felt so sure of herself that, though she noticed her friend seemed disappointed, it did not occur to her that it was from concern as to the result of the interview until she heard a whispered "Be firm." Constance turned a resolute face toward her, and by a close pressure of the hand gave the desired assurance; then, as the stylish equipage rolled away from the church door, she stepped to Gordon's side, sadly conscious that this was to be their last walk together.

Three days later, in the evening, Gordon Perry rang at the house of the Rev. George Prentiss, the comfortable looking and architecturally pleasing rectory in the neighborhood of St. Stephen's. A trim maid ushered him into an ante-room where all parochial visitors were first shown, and asked for his name. There was a nondescript elderly woman in black ahead of him. In his capacity as rector of a large parish, Mr. Prentiss followed the modern methods of other busy professional men. An electric bell at his desk notified the servant that the interview with the last comer was at an end and that the next in order was to be introduced. Gordon had not long to wait. His remaining predecessor's stay was brief. The rector's heartiness was almost apologetic as he strode a pace or two forward to greet his visitor.

"Mr. Perry, I am very glad to see you. I am sorry that you should have been kept waiting. But the clergy cannot afford to be unbusiness-like, can they? We intend to live down that taunt. So my rule is 'first come, first served.'"

"The only proper rule, I am sure."

It was a spacious, well-filled room, the manifest workshop of an industrious man, but furnished with an eye to æsthetic appropriateness as well as utility. Red leather chairs and lounges of goodly proportions, two symmetrical, carved tables covered with documents, books, and pamphlets, warm curtains, an open wood fire, a globe, sundry busts and framed photographs of celebrities, mainly clerical, including a large one of Phillips Brooks and another of Abraham Lincoln, were its distinguishing characteristics.

Mr. Prentiss stepped to one of the tables and opening an oblong Japanese box drew out a handful of cigars.

"Will you smoke, Mr. Perry?" he asked cheerily.

Gordon took one, and the clergyman, who reserved his use of tobacco for occasions when by so doing he might hope to make clearer that he was human, did the same. As soon as they were lit, Mr. Prentiss with a sweep of his hand indicated two easy chairs on either side of the fire; but after

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his guest was seated he himself stood with his back to the mantel-piece, his hands behind him, the commanding affable figure of a good fellow. Still he chose to show at the same time what was in his heart at the moment coincident with his manifestations of secular hospitality.

"That woman who just went out has recently buried her only son, the joy and prop of her old age. She came to thank me for a trifling donation I had sent her. Her courage and her trust were beautiful to witness. These humble lives often furnish the most eloquent testimonials of the eternal realities." He spoke with the enthusiasm of his calling, as a doctor or a lawyer might have set before an acquaintance an interesting case. He liked to feel that he was on the same footing with the world of men as they, with respect to privileges no less than responsibilities. For an instant he seemed to muse on the experience, then briskly recurring to the immediate situation, said:

"But what can I do for you, Mr. Perry? My assistant, Mr. Starkworth, tells me that you take an active personal interest in the social problems of our community."

This bland presumption of ignorance as to the cause of his visit made Gordon smile. He could not but suspect that it was artificial. Yet the inquiry was by no means hypocritical; for though Mr. Prentiss was fully conscious of his caller's identity, and had given him a correspondingly genial reception, he regarded the episode of the proposed marriage as so completely closed by Constance's decision that he did not choose to believe that Gordon had come for the unseemly purpose of reviving it. It seemed to him far more probable that his advice or assistance was sought in some humanitarian or civic cause.

"Yes," said Gordon slowly, enjoying the development of the opening which occurred to him, "Mr. Starkworth and I have co-operated from time to time, with mutual liking, I think. It is in regard to a social problem that I have come to consult you this evening."

"Ah," said the rector, relieved in spite of his belief, and thereupon he settled himself in the other capacious easy chair and turned a cordially attentive countenance to his guest. "You may feel assured of my interest in anything of that kind."

"It concerns my own marriage," said Gordon.

The challenge was so unmistakable, like a gauntlet thrown at his feet, that Mr. Prentiss was for an instant disconcerted, then irritated. But the pleasant manner of his opponent negatived the aroused suspicion that effrontery lurked behind this slightly sardonic introduction, and he met the attack with a grave but supple dignity.

"Indeed," he said. "I shall be very glad to hear what you have to say, Mr. Perry."

(To be continued.)

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LIGHT BETWEEN THE TREES

By Henry van Dyke

LONG, long, long the trail
  Thro' the brooding forest-gloom;
Down the shadowy, lonely vale
  Into silence, like a room
    Where the light of life has fled,
  And the jealous curtains close
  Round the passionless repose
    Of the silent dead.

Plod, plod, plod away,
  Step by step in mouldering moss;
Woven branches bar the day
  Over languid streams that cross
    Softly, slowly, with a sound
  In their aimless creeping
  Like a smothered weeping,
    Thro' the enchanted ground.

"Yield, yield, yield thy quest,"
  Whispers 'round the woodland deep
"Come to me and be at rest,
  I am slumber, I am sleep."
    Then the weary feet would fail,
  But the never-daunted will
  Urges "Forward, forward still!
    Press along the trail!"

Breast, breast, breast the slope!
  See, the path is growing steep.
Hark! a little song of hope
  Where the stream begins to leap.
    Though the forest, far and wide,
  Still shuts out the bending blue,
  We shall finally win through—
    Cross the long divide.

On, on, onward tramp!
  Will the journey never end?
Over yonder lies the camp;
  Welcome waits us there, my friend.
    Can we reach it ere the night?
  Upward, upward, never fear!
  Look, the summit must be near,
    See the line of light!

Red, red, red the shine
  Of the splendor in the west,
Glowing through the ranks of pine,
  Clear along the mountain-crest.
Long, long, long the trail
Out of sorrow's lonely vale;
  But at last the traveller sees
  Light between the trees!

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EX CURIA

By Robert W. Chambers

ILLUSTRATIONS BY HOWARD CHANDLER CHRISTY

AND now, at his attorney's request, and before his report was made, they decided to run through the documents in the case once more, reviewing everything from the very beginning. So young Courtlandt, his attorney, lighted a cigar and unwrapped the pink tape from the bundle of papers.

There was enough daylight left to read by, for wall and ceiling still bore the faded imprint of the red winter sunset. Edgerton sat before the fire, his well-shaped head buried in his hands; Courtlandt, lounging on a sofa by the window, unfolded the first paper, puffed thoughtfully at his cigar, and presently began to read without inflection or apparent interest:

PARIS, December 24, 1902.

JOHN EDGERTON, Esq.

Sir: My client, Michael Innis, is seriously ill, and I am writing you on his behalf and at his urgent solicitation.

It would appear that, during the panic of 1884, my client came to your father's assistance, at a time when your father's financial ruin, involving also, I believe, the ruin of many of his friends, was apparently only a question of hours.

It would also appear that, upon your father's death, you wrote Mr. Innis, voluntarily assuming your father's unpaid obligations. (Copy of your letter herewith inclosed.)

It further appears that Mr. Innis, accepting the assurance of your personal gratitude, generously offered to wait for the sums due him, permitting you to pay at your own convenience. (Copy of Mr. Innis's letter inclosed herewith.)

In the conclusion of this last letter (No. 2 on file) Mr. Innis mentions his life-long respect for your father and his family, humorously drawing the social distinction between the late Winthrop Edgerton, Esq., and Michael Innis the Tammany contractor; and rather wistfully contrasting the future prospects of Mr. Edgerton's son, yourself, and the chances of the child of Michael Innis.

To this letter you replied (copy herewith), repeating in a manly fashion your assurance of gratitude, holding yourself at the service of Mr. Innis.

Now, sir, if your assurances meant more than mere civility, you have an opportunity to erase the deep obligations that your father assumed.

Mr. Innis is a man broken in mind and body. His fortune was invested, against my advice, in Madagascar Railways. To-day he could not realize a thousand dollars from the investment.

For twenty years his one absorbing passion has been the education and fitting of his only child for a position in the world which he himself could never hope to attain. Wealth and education, linked with an agreeable personality, may go anywhere in this century. And his daughter has had the best that Europe can afford.

Within a month, all is changed. Sir, it is sad to see this stricken man lying here, watching his daughter.

And now, knowing that impending dissolution is near, terror of the future for her has wrung an appeal from him to you—a strange appeal, Mr. Edgerton. Money alone is little; he asks more: he asks your protection for her—not the perfunctory protection of a guardian for a ward, but the guidance of a father, the companionship of a brother, the loyalty of a husband.

The man is blinded by worship of his own child; your father's son represents to him all that is noblest, most honorable, most desirable in the world.

Sir, this is a strange request, an overdrawn draft upon your gratitude, I fear. Yet I write you as I am bidden. An answer should be returned by cable with as little delay as possible. He will live until he receives it Marriage by proxy is legal. Special dispensation is certain.

I am, sir, with great respect,

Your very humble servant,

WILLIAM CAMPBELL.

Att'y and Counsellor at Law,
7 rue d'Issy.

When Courtlandt finished reading he folded the letter, glancing across at Edgerton: "That was written two years ago to-day, you remember?—this foreclosure of his mortgage upon your gratitude!"

"I remember," said Edgerton.

"From the gratitude of the conscientious, Good Lord deliver us!" murmured Courtlandt, unfolding another paper. "This is a copy of the asinine cablegram you sent, without consulting me." And he read:

INNIS,
23 rue d'Abdul Hamid,
Paris.

I assume all responsibility for your daughter's future. Utterly impossible for me to leave New York. If you believe marriage advisable, arrange for special dispensation and ceremony by proxy.

JOHN EDGERTON.

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Drawn by Howard Chandler Christy.

Courtlandt unfolded the first paper and began to read.—Page 240.

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Courtlandt rose and walked over to the fire where Edgerton was sitting. His client raised his head, eyes a trifle dazed from the pressure of his fingers on the closed lids.

"What the merry deuce did you send that cable for?" muttered Courtlandt under his breath.

"I don't know—a debt of gratitude—and he did not want it paid in money. I—an appeal like that had to be honored, you see. I was ashamed to haggle at the day of reckoning. A man cannot appraise his own gratitude."

"Such things cannot be asked of gratitude," growled the attorney. "The business of the world is not run on impulse! What is gratitude?"

"It is not gratitude if it asks that question," returned Edgerton; "and I fear that after all it was not exactly gratitude. Gratitude gives; a debt of honor exacts. There is no profit in following this line farther, is there, Billy?"

"No," assented Courtlandt, "unless it's going to help us disentangle the unfortunate affair." He unfolded another paper. "It's too dark to read," he observed, leaning forward into the firelight. The red reflection of the coals played over his face and the black-edged note-paper he was scanning. And he read, slowly:

JANUARY 3, 1903.

DEAR MR. EDGERTON: For your very gentle letter to me I beg to thank you; I deeply appreciate your delicacy at a time when kindness is most needed. Had you not written as you have, I should have found it difficult to discuss a situation which I am only just beginning to realize must be as embarrassing to you as it is to me.

In the grief and distress which overwhelmed me when I was so suddenly summoned from the convent to find my father so ill, I did not, could not realize the step I was asked to take. All I knew was that he desired it, begged for it, and it meant to me nothing—this ceremony which made you my husband—nothing except a little happiness for the father I loved.

He made the responses for you, I kneeling at his bedside, scarce able to speak in my grief. There were two brief ceremonies, the civil and religious. He died very quietly that night.

Pray believe me that I understand how impossible it is for you to leave affairs of importance to come to Paris at this time. My aunt, who is with the Ursulines, has received me. It is very quiet, very peaceful; I have opportunity for meditation, and for studies which I left uncompleted. Mr. Campbell, whom you have so considerately retained for my legal guidance, is kind and tactful. He has, I believe, communicated with you in regard to the most generous provision you have made for me. Pray believe that I require very, very little. I regret the loss of my father's fortune only because it should have perhaps compensated you a trifle for your kindness to my father in his last hours.

I hesitate—I feel the greatest reluctance and delicacy in addressing you upon a matter that troubles me. It is this, Mr. Edgerton: if, through gratitude to my father for service done your father, you offered to become responsible for me, perhaps—I do not know—perhaps, as you have done me the honor of protecting me with your name, it is all that could be expected—and I hasten to assure you that I am content. Indeed, had I realized, had I even begun to comprehend what I was doing—— Yet what could I do but obey him at such a time?

So, if you think it well that we remain apart for a while, I am content and happy to obey your wishes. Your name, which I now bear, I honor; your wishes, monsieur, are my commands.

With gratitude, confidence, and respect I remain,

Faithfully yours,
KATHLEEN INNIS EDGERTON.

Convent of the Ursulines,
rue Daumont.

Courtlandt refolded the letter, and sat rubbing his eyes. "For heaven's sake let's have a light!" he grumbled, leaning over and pushing the electric button.

The light broke out overhead, flooding the library, glistening among gay evergreen wreaths tied with bunches of Christmas holly which hung against the library windows.

Edgerton raised his pale face, then his head sank on his breast; he folded his arms, gazing absently into the fire. "Go on," he said.

So Courtlandt read other letters from Mrs. Edgerton, brief notes, perfunctory, reserved, and naïve; and he read letters from Campbell the attorney, acknowledging provisions made for his young client.

When he finished he refolded all the papers, retied them with pink tape, and laid them on the table at Edgerton's elbow. "Now," he said, "comes the question. You have arrived at the conclusion that Mrs. Edgerton desires and deserves her freedom. And you want to know what I think."

"Yes," said Edgerton.

"You gave me a month to look up the matter."

"Yes, a month."

"And now you want me to report, don't you, Jack?"

Edgerton glanced up. "If you're ready," he said.

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Drawn by Howard Chandler Christy.

"I—I wonder if you are as embarrassed as I am?" she said.—Page 248.

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"I'm ready. First I want to ask you a question. Is there any woman you have met, before or since your marriage, whom you might fall in love with if you were free to do so?"

"No, I believe not—I don't know. I am—I was not actuated by selfishness."

"All right. Still, you are capable of loving somebody, are you not?"

"I fancy so. I should like to have a chance to marry—for love."

"But you never met the right one?"

"There is—I have caught a glimpse—once—one woman——"

"Is that all?" laughed Courtlandt. "That's not enough to bowl you over."

"It was almost enough!" retorted Edgerton. Through his voice rang an undertone of impatience. His attorney looked up quickly.

"Oh, is it as serious as that? No wonder you want your freedom! Who is the woman?"

"I don't know what you mean," retorted the younger man sullenly. "I told you that I saw a woman once, whom I should like to have had a chance to see again. What of it? I never shall."

"When was this, Jack?"

"Yesterday—if you want to know."

"Where?"

"Driving in the park."

"Who is she?"

"You could answer that question," said Edgerton, wheeling around on his friend. "You were driving with her."

Courtlandt stared, slowly turning redder and redder.

"You wanted to know," observed Edgerton, eyeing him. "It means nothing, of course—I was riding along the bridle path and I caught a glimpse of you, and I saw her face. I thought her beautiful, that's all. Drop the subject."

"Certainly," answered Courtlandt. He opened his match-box and relighted his cigar; then he fell to musing, breaking the burnt match up into little pieces and tossing the morsels, one by one, into the fire.

"Jack," he drawled, still busy with the match, "you gave me a month to report upon this matter concerning the dissolution of your marriage. It might interest you to learn the first step I took."

"What was it?" inquired Edgerton, raising his troubled eyes.

"I went to Paris."

"To—to see——"

"Certainly, to see Mrs. Edgerton."

The men's eyes met; the lawyer shrugged his shoulders.

"Mrs. Edgerton is very inexperienced, very young," he said. "She is, of course, a Catholic. But if she desired her freedom a thousand times as fervently as you might desire yours, the law of her religion bars her way. You knew that of course."

"I thought—sometimes——" began the other.

"You are wrong."

Edgerton stared into the glowing coals.

"So you left it to me to see what could be done," added the attorney dryly.

Edgerton assented.

"Well," said Courtlandt, "I shouldn't have accepted such a commission had I not known it was quite unselfish on your part. You told me that her letters to you were pitifully loyal and conscientious; that you felt like a jailer watching an innocent life prisoner; that if you only knew how to do it you would give her the liberty God meant her to enjoy—liberty to love and be loved. And you allowed me a month to find the way to settle this wretched affair."

"Yes. Is there a way?"

"Only one," replied Courtlandt gravely. He rose, offering his hand.

Edgerton also rose, tall, clean cut, closely cropped hair just tinged with gray at the temples.

"Only one way," repeated Courtlandt deliberately, "and that is for you to discuss the situation with Mrs. Edgerton."

"What!" exclaimed Edgerton sharply, dropping his friend's hand. "You know I can't leave town to go to Paris."

Courtlandt coolly consulted his watch. "I neglected to say that Mrs. Edgerton is in town. I believe"—he glanced at his watch again, then closed it with a snap—"I suggested that she waive ceremony and meet us here."

"Here!" muttered Edgerton. "Wait a moment, will you? Do you mean to say that she is coming here *to-night?*"

"Why not?" said Courtlandt, his gray eyes narrowing. "If she chooses to accept my advice, if she is woman enough to overlook what is due her from her husband, why should she not come here as freely as you come?"

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Drawn by Howard Chandler Christy.

At the foot of the stairs she made him a low reverence.—Page 249.

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"Are you my attorney or hers?" demanded the other in astonishment.

"Yours, Jack—acting for your interest—which is hers too—which must be hers. Where is your sense of honor? Where is your sense of justice? Has the glimpse of a woman's face in the park seared your eyes? Is it true that an indifferent man can be just, but a man in love is a partisan? You could be coldly considerate and deal out passionless justice until yesterday. Now for the first time the fetters gall you. Is this the crisis where you flinch?"

He stood, jerking on his gloves, scanning Edgerton's face.

"I told her that the proper place to discuss the situation was under her own roof; and I am right. Do you consider a public hotel the suitable environment for such a conference? Her pride and intelligence comprehended me. That's all I have to say."

"Why did you not tell me before this that she was in town? I understand the requirements of civilization, do I not?"

"I did not tell you, because we landed only yesterday morning."

"She came over with *you?*"

"On my advice and at my earnest solicitation."

Edgerton stared at him, tugging at his short mustache.

"What are we to discuss?" he demanded sullenly. "As she is Catholic we cannot discuss divorce. We could, of course, come to some conclusion concerning a *modus vivendi.*"

"I expect you to come to some such conclusion. Two years ago you were twenty-eight—an over-sensitive young man, impulsive, illogical, and morbid concerning personal obligations. Without consulting your legal adviser you perpetrated a crime—for it is criminal to parody the highest safeguard of civilization—marriage. It was a crime; your wife is your accomplice—*particeps criminis*, my friend. Neither you nor she deserves mercy."

He turned away, buttoning his gloves.

"It's touched your temples with gray," he observed. "You have learned something at thirty, Jack, even if it's cost you what you think a mésalliance."

As he stepped to the door a maid appeared with a card on a salver. Edgerton glanced at it, then looked straight into Courtlandt's eyes.

"I'm sorry I needed this lesson in decency," he said. "It was all right for you to administer it. You need not worry; I understand that I am at my wife's disposal, not she at mine. I've kept my medicine waiting two years, that's all."

"Oh, you're getting on," observed Courtlandt carelessly. "Good-night—I've a word to say to Mrs. Edgerton before I go."

"You mean to stay, don't you?" began the other, flushing up. "It would be less trying for her——"

But Courtlandt hurried off down the stairs, muttering vaguely of engagements for Christmas Eve, leaving Edgerton staring after him through the dimly lighted hallway.

He heard Courtlandt enter the drawing-room; he could distinguish the quick, low exchange of greeting; then he went down slowly, steadying himself by the banisters.

A young girl in furs turned toward him as he entered; he caught a glimpse of blue eyes, a glint of bright hair framed in fluffy fur; he heard Courtlandt's cool, easy voice presenting him to his wife; he took the slim gloved hand outstretched, held it stupidly until it was withdrawn; then Courtlandt's voice again, promising to return, and exacting her promise to wait here for him if he should be detained.

"I'm sorry I can't remain and dine with you and Mr. Edgerton on this night before Christmas," added Courtlandt blandly, making for the door.

"Oh," she said, surprised, "I did not understand that Mr. Edgerton invited us."

The color stung Edgerton's face, and he said in a low voice: "You are at home, madam; it is for you to invite us. Perhaps Mr. Courtlandt will stay if you ask him; I will if you ask me."

She gave him a confused, brilliant little smile, a delicate tint mounting to her cheeks.

"Thank you," she said; "you—everybody is so delightful to me. Will you stay, Mr. Courtlandt? I—we beg of you! No? Then, until I—until we have the pleasure—at nine, I believe?"

From force of habit she turned to the dazed maid, who also instinctively recognized authority, and opened the door which a second later closed upon the most profoundly excited young attorney in Manhattan.

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Drawn by Howard Chandler Christy.

"Can you forgive me?" he asked under his breath.—Page 250.

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Mrs. Edgerton raised her blue eyes to her husband as a maid relieved her of her furs and little gilt-edged tricorne.

"I—I wonder if you are as embarrassed as I am?" she said, laughing and touching her golden hair with a frank side glance at the mirror.

"Dreadfully embarrassed," admitted Edgerton, scarcely conscious of what he uttered; oblivious, too, of the usages of civilization until she sank into an armchair with a shy "May I?"

"It is for me to ask the privilege," he said, biting his lip.

"Oh, if you please?"—she smiled, with a gesture toward the chair beside her.

Seated there together under the crystal chandelier, she fell silent, meeting his gaze at moments with a questioning smile, partly confident, partly uncertain.

"I saw you in the park yesterday," he said under his breath, never taking his eyes from her.

"I saw you, too," she replied quickly. "You rode a bay. I never imagined——" she bent her head, thoughtfully studying the arabesques on the rug. "You ride very well," she added. Then, after a moment's silence: "And you remembered me?"

"I recognized you at once," he said, "the instant I entered this room. It was that which startled me—made me appear stupid——"

"You did not appear stupid——"

"I was awkward, dumb——"

"I chattered sufficiently for two. Indeed, I was not at all composed."

"Did—did you recognize me at once?"

She looked at him, she glanced at the rug, her blue eyes grew vague, lost in retrospective revery.

He did not repeat the question, but asked her how long it was since she had been in America.

"Oh, many years—I was only three when my father went to France." Then the warm color came into her face and she clasped her hands impulsively. "I do not believe," she said, "that I have conveyed to you in letters my deep appreciation of your loyalty to me. I—I did not know how to express it—I do not now. Believe me, monsieur, it does exist!"

"What have you to thank me for?" he asked almost brusquely. Then, in a rush of bitterness: "your sentiments honor yourself, not me, madam. For two years I have been responsible for your happiness. What have I done to secure it?"

She turned a trifle pale, unprepared for such a question. But she answered very sweetly: "You left me guarded by the honor of your own name. I have never wanted for anything; I have had the quiet and seclusion I desired. What more is there, Mr. Edgerton?"

And as he remained silent, she raised her head with a gay little smile: "You could not leave your affairs to come to France; you did not suggest that I come to New York. How could I know that I should——"

"What?" he urged.

But she closed her red lips, sitting mute, suddenly shy again.

After a moment she said, "Mais—he is absent a long while, Mr. Courtlandt."

"He isn't coming until nine o'clock," said Edgerton. He glanced across at the clock. It was half-past seven.

"So, in the meanwhile, we are to discuss matters of importance," she suggested seriously. "Mr. Courtlandt said so. What monsieur, are we to discuss?"

"There is absolutely nothing that I know of to discuss," replied Edgerton slowly.

"Nothing? "she inquired, wide-eyed and innocent.

"Nothing, except your wishes, and they admit of no discussion. You are at home now."

"But I—but I am staying at the Holland—— " Edgerton touched a button; a servant appeared.

"Mrs. Edgerton's luggage is at the Holland," he said quietly. "Telephone for it."

Mrs. Edgerton half rose from her chair; then, meeting her husband's grave eyes, she sank back, crimson to the temples.

"We are merely about to exchange quarters," he said pleasantly. "I shall be most comfortable at the Holland."

"Oh, you shall not!—no, it is all wrong!" she pleaded, the color fading in her face. "I cannot come into your house—into your life——"

"It is your house," he said gently. "Still, if—if you don't mind—there is a better way still of arranging matters. I have a whole floor on the third story; and perhaps you might not mind if I retain it. I promise," he added laughing, "to be a

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model tenant and not keep coal in my bath-tub!"

She laughed too, a little uncertainly.

"You are so generous—so kindly," she said. "How can you endure to have a perfectly silly girl march into your house——"

"*Your* house!"

"*Your* house! Carry it by assault, capture the nicest suite, and drive you to the roof among the sparrows! No, it is shameful! More than that, it is absurd!"

"I never have occupied the rooms on the second floor," he protested. "They have been vacant since I took this house."

"Truly?"

"Truly. They are too pretty for a man who smokes a pipe—all rococo, and furniture with beagle legs, you know."

"For whom were they intended?" she asked innocently.

He reddened. "I bought the house after our wedding," he hesitated; "then, afterward, from your letters, I fancied that you might prefer to remain abroad. So I said nothing."

She bent her head. "I—I thought it fairer—to you," she said in a low voice. "I would have come had you asked me. I—how was I to know, Mr. Edgerton?"

They sat silent, eyes bent on the floor. Presently he went on: "So I had that suite fixed up for you. And I moved upstairs. I am very happy that you are to occupy it."

"Do you *really* desire it?"

"You have no idea how pretty it is," he urged.

"Is it so pretty?"

"Come up and look at it!"

She sprang to her feet on the impulse, smiling, confident of his kindness, And they mounted the stairs together, *sans façon*, arriving on the second floor breathless.

"Oh," she cried softly, as she entered, "it is perfectly charming!" She stood a moment, gazing around, then with a delightful gesture bade him enter.

"Is this really mine?" she repeated. "How delicious!" She passed from room to room, pausing before bits of furniture that attracted her, touching and lifting the silver on dresser and table. "My own initials!" she said under her breath. "And what is this?" laying her white fingers on a jewel case. "Am I to open it? Really! Oh, the beauty of it all! I—I am perfectly overwhelmed, mons—Mr. Edgerton!" And she sat down on the edge of the bed, pressing her hands to her eyes.

A maid came to the door; the luggage from the Holland had arrived. Presently two burly expressmen entered, staggering under the first of a series of trunks. Her maid directed the men; Mrs. Edgerton sat, hands folded, smiling, blue eyes a trifle dim, while her husband, standing beside her, directed operations.

The silvery chime of a clock sounded, striking eight times, and on either side of the dial gilt cupids fluttered their burnished wings.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Edgerton. Then with a laugh almost boyish, he said: "We're supposed to dine at eight."

She looked vacantly at her husband: "Dinner already! Can it be possible time has flown like that? And I—behold me! Have I time to dress?"

"Time is yours to dispose of," he said, smiling back into her eyes; "all here are yours to dispose of as you see fit."

"Even you, monsieur?" She laughed in her excitement and happiness, not weighing words and their meaning until their echo returned again to appall her—while her maid aided her to dress—and the echo of his answer, too, rang persistently in her ears: "Yes, to pardon, to dispose of, to command, always, as long as I have life to serve you."

And now she was ready, smiling nervously back at her own flushed reflection in the mirror—a young girl stirred to the soul by kindness, almost intoxicated at a glimpse of her own undreamed-of beauty, surprised there in the depths of the mirror.

The banisters were decorated with twisted ropes of evergreens; she descended slowly, cheeks burning, eyes fixed steadily on her husband, who stood motionless below to receive her. A tiny light here and there caught the thick tendrils of her heavy burnished hair and glimmered on her smooth, full neck and arms.

At the foot of the stairs she paused, made him a low reverence, then, gathering her silken train, she looked fearlessly into his face and laid her hand lightly in his.

So, moving serenely side by side, they passed under holly and mistletoe and ropes of evergreen, through the long drawing-room, through the music-room, slowly,

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more slowly, until the great velvet hangings barred their way.

There they paused, turning face to face, her small hand scarcely touching his.

"Can you forgive me?" he asked under his breath.

"Forgive you?" she repeated tremulously, "I can do—more than that. . . . Ask me."

But there was no time, for the butler, bowing, had drawn the portières to the full length of the golden cords.

THE POINT OF VIEW

AT the last annual meeting of the American Federation of Labor, the convention held in Boston and representing a constituency of a million and a quarter of members, the delegates, we are told, "received with prolonged cheers" the suggestion of Mr. James O'Grady, a fraternal delegate from Great Britain, that "the representative labor bodies in England and America join forces in one great international universal body of organized labor." Probably not one of those who cheered, if even one of them stopped to consider the significance of such an organization, grasped the true import of the suggestion, involving as it does a return to the primitive type of loyalty characterizing semi-civilization.

Which Kind of Loyalty?

Loyalty or patriotism, in its general acceptance, was at first fidelity to the family, then fidelity to the tribe or clan, then, under the feudal system, to the overlord, then to the king as the supreme overlord, and finally to the representative legislative assembly for the entire community, when recognized as embodying in its law-making prerogatives the right to control king and citizen alike for the good of the all. To substitute loyalty to the class for loyalty to the community or country is obviously to revert to a loyalty whose first allegiance was to the tribe or clan, and thus to disorganizing conditions. Such a possibility led President Roosevelt to declare in a Labor Day speech that "any kind of class animosity in the political world is, if possible, even more destructive to national welfare than sectional, race, or religious animosity."

Curiously enough, this possibility, however remote, follows the centuries of evolution through which society has so slowly and haltingly grown, back to the original meaning of the word loyalty. This is pointed out by Freeman as evidenced by its derivation from *loi* in the same way that royalty is derived from *roi*. In Freeman's view, the phrase "loyal man" ought etymologically, no less than as the consummation of social development, to stand for the distinguishing quality of the "good citizen," the quality of obedience to the law "because it is the law, because it is the binding rule of the community of which the citizen is a part." Per contra, it is the critical attitude toward law as the authoritative expression of community rule, in the demand that law be modified in administration or even in enactment to admit supposed special privileges and exceptions, that to thoughtful persons constitutes the chief menace from the new class loyalty of aggressive unionism. For concrete illustration, one has but to note the spontaneous protest wherever a street-car strike occurs, against the use of police or militia to insure the peaceable operation of the service. The same attitude appears, though less obviously, in many carefully considered utterances of even conservative labor leaders. For example, Mr. Clark, head of the Order of Railway Conductors and member of the coal strike commission, protests against compulsory incorporation of unions under laws "especially constructed and intended for corporations of capital." Similarly Mr. Gompers, head of the Federation of Labor, protests against the attempt to apply the restrictions of the interstate commerce law to "workmen seeking to protect their interests against an opponent"—a euphemism for resort to the boycott. Such an attitude, characterizing it simply on broad, untechnical grounds, sacrifices to the class the superior claim of the community on the loyalty of the good citizen. It fails to take into account that, in the interest of the community, legal responsibilities attach to the

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use of accumulated capital, whatever the purpose of accumulation; and that, similarly, injury is done to the community by interference with freedom of interstate commerce, whether such injury be inflicted by a monopoly of capital or a monopoly of labor.

The latest phase of loyalty, that of allegiance to the community only so far as it serves the interest of a class, "carries us," as Freeman wrote with another thought in mind, "quite away from the somewhat homely, perhaps somewhat republican, style of virtue suggested by the word *legalitas*." That "homely style of virtue" belongs to one whom Professor Sumner has well named the "Forgotten Man"—the "honest, sober, industrious citizen, unknown outside his little circle, who pays his debts and his taxes and supports the church and the school." The "Forgotten Man" is all the rest of us after organization and classification have done their perfect work. The "Forgotten Man" restores the social equilibrium after the disturbance of experiment subsides, while on him falls the full incidence of its cost. Quiet, unobtrusive, self-reliant, and law-abiding, he remains as he has always been, the true type of community loyalty. For the "Forgotten Man" is simply the good citizen overlooked.

The Decline of the Preface

NOW and then one is led to wonder what has become of the Preface. The indications are that it will soon be totally extinct. Of modern authors using the English tongue Mr. Bernard Shaw is almost the only one prefixing his works with prefaces properly so called. Occasionally we have introductions by various pens, but they are mostly meagre and perfunctory performances, impersonal and unphilosophical. The *genre* of the preface is kept alive in a sort still by the practice of giving a god-speed to some little-known or foreign work by means of explanatory remarks by a familiar native celebrity. But the expository revelation of another in a preface has not the peculiar value of an expository revelation of one's self and one's own intent. In a certain way there is nothing quite equal to this. Avowed autobiography concerns itself with the events of a life and the conduct of a man in contact with them. To falsify a little, however unconsciously, is, when dealing with these matters, almost the condition of being human. In dealing with his literary convictions, or with those psychological experiences that express themselves in his book, on the other hand, a man generally sticks to the truth. And it is this side of him that comes out in a full and right and proper preface. Hence the good of it, and the good those get of it who are of the kind to be instructed by such genuine self-confessions.

It is Mr. Bernard Shaw who says, precisely in one of his prefaces and in extenuation of their garrulity, that the world could dispense with some of Shakespeare's plays if only, in exchange, he might have had the habit of writing prefaces. Everyone will not want to go so far, and yet it is certain that a greater value would attach to those varicolored plays if we had some one strictly personal utterance from their author as to the determining notion that was in him about the conduct of life. That, after all, is what we really want from any commanding fellow-creature—that he should tell us sincerely what he, who can do so many things, truly thinks of life and death, and the wise way to cross the distance between.

Something of this—pleasantly and colloquially in the best examples, for the writer does not know, in defending and explaining his work, how much he is talking from out his own inner being—is what is disclosed in a preface. For the sake of it we excuse many minor vanities, and not a little attitudinizing, Shawesque or other. The preface seems to be in a state of decadence because it appears to our present writers to be too egotistical, yet perhaps there are worse things than egotism in literature. It is probably impossible for a man to be much in earnest about his work and to keep his troublesome personal self quite out of it. No artistic worker is as self-conscious as he used to be; talent and genius, in the promise or in the fruition, mix more and more on equal terms with the common run of mankind. But there is such a thing as so deprecating the thought of being different that distinctions on which much depends may almost disappear. Not to take one's self too much *au sérieux* is a pose now in literature, quite as much as once it was to do so. This detached attitude is supposed to be a fruit of the mercantile spirit in which the modern author now so often woos the muse. What *is* the mercantile spirit in literature, however? Literature is less or more vital at different periods, but you can't mercantilize genuine

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inspiration, and never could. There will always be personal passion, prejudice, bias, in the literary worker who counts for anything, and he will always empty himself into his work. Yet that great vehicle for his direct expression, the preface, may not, for all that, return to favor. It may pass into the limbo of obsolete fashions in literature, just as the elaborate dedication has done. Authors will make their meaning wholly implicit in their book, not explicit in a preface. And of course countless thousands of readers will never mind the omission of the prefatory remarks. The preface never existed for them, in any case. They always skipped it cynically, or ignored it callously. It is the spirits with a psychological and philosophical twist, curious about their fellow-men, who will miss it, because they will know that there was never invented a better way of getting close to that elusive, yet always-fascinating mystery, the human soul.

THERE is a certain exhilaration in meeting a new word and recognizing its capacities. Frequently it changes that for which it stands from the intolerable to the attractive in your estimation. I find the carriwitchet endearing, for example, though I find the pun—which is almost the same thing—detestable.

Blethering

The other day I garnered from a little book of Irish poetry and prose the word "blether," and fell at once in love with it. Had I seen it only in a dictionary, I should probably have felt in it no special charm, since, according to that authority, "blether" as a noun is nonsense or foolish talk, and to be "blethery" is to be unsubstantial, trashy, or deceptive. But according to my Antrim Irishman, to blether harmlessly, rationally, and hygienically, demands a particular skill and a charming temperament. It is to enlarge the spirit under the cramping influence of adversity or the crass monotony of toil, by entering temporarily into league with the imps of inconsequence. The true blether is never employed save as a means of mental and spiritual refreshment, and may consist of a great variety of exercises. If you are a person of no voice, the singing of a difficult operatic air is recommended as a particularly fine blether. If you wish to take your relaxation as inconspicuously as possible, it will sometimes answer the purpose to compose odes and essays containing a serious kind of raillery designed to puzzle the wits of the reasonable. It will be remembered that Charles Lamb, under the oppression of the East India Office, indited an apostrophe to roast pig. The late Mr. Whistler was hardly less an artist in blethering than in reproducing the appearances of the external world. Witness the "Gentle Art of Making Enemies" and those significant sketches on the edge of the Coast Survey map.

Shakespeare, also, could realize the very ecstasy of the accomplished bletherer. "Do you know me, my lord?" Polonius demands of the burdened Hamlet. "Excellent, excellent well; y'are a fishmonger." Yet even among the Celtic races there are found those who call great Hamlet mad. And there may be those who deemed Thackeray but questionably sane on the occasion of his famous drive through New York, his feet out of the cab window by way of relaxation from the strain of American lecturing. The Antrim man would have known the hall-mark of the blether. Among our personal acquaintances we probably could find numerous less illustrious but equally authentic examples of the blethering spirit. I know a man of honorable years and literary profession who went upon a solemn occasion to deliver an address before his Alma Mater. The address was eloquent and moved his hearers. Later they discussed its noble imagery, unaware that its author was then rolling down the green sward of a hill back of the college buildings, enjoying a blether such as the mind of youth could in nowise conceive. Beside these obvious instances that fall under the convenient Antrim classification, there are others more subtle, in which the note is more sustained. What can we call the immortal preface to "The Egoist" if not the quintessence of blethering brought to so fine a distillation as almost to escape the surest intelligence? And what but the most consummate blethering (if we can bring ourselves so lightly to name that fine courage) was the monumental defiance of Stevenson to all the powers of melancholy? With this last radiant example in mind it is not difficult to see in the blether a symbol of the wild Celtic fancy, the tameless grace of souls constantly escaping from the trammels of conventional dignity and gloom.

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THE FIELD OF ART

THE PLAN OF NEW YORK, AND HOW TO IMPROVE IT.

PROBABLY no more important plan was ever made at a single stroke than that for the laying out of the upper part of the City of New York, adopted early in the last century, and since then adhered to with a fidelity worthy of a better result. This plan has governed in the expenditure of untold wealth; it has probably had as much to do as any other one thing in shaping the character, habits and customs of the people, for it has fixed their environment; it has lain like a huge gridiron on the city, binding it to hopeless monotony and humdrum commercialism of aspect, and acting as a barrier to any attempt to impart to the town that grand metropolitan air which distinguishes most of the great capitals of Europe.

If the planners had only followed the simplest dictates of common prudence and provided a broad open strip along each water front, and another through the centre of the island to insure ample means of transit, the other failings of their plan might have been forgiven; for even with this much—so great are the natural advantages of the site—New York could have become one of the most beautiful and commodious cities on earth.

It is easy enough now, as we look at the plan, to follow the narrow working of the minds of the planners. To them the great city of the future was to be simply an enlargement of the primitive town of their own day. Their horizon was bounded entirely by what they saw before them, and their one desire seems to have been to make use of every available square foot of land for strictly utilitarian purposes. The side streets were to afford quiet places of residence, and the avenues the necessary means of communication longitudinally. With this one idea in mind, everything else was easy; the natural topography of the island was disregarded; streets were laid out over watercourse, swamp and hill, with mathematical regularity. The first requisites of a great metropolis for other things than streets and lots seem not to have been considered. Of artistic effect there was not a suggestion; the thought of such a thing probably never entered the heads of the planners. Their ideas were narrow and provincial, and their plan reflected and has retained their ideals. With such a plan, is it surprising that the city should be noted for its lack of civic pride?

So little did the makers of the plan foresee the enormous pressure which would be brought upon the longitudinal means of transit when the city should be built up, by the daily ebb and flow of the vast population for which lots were provided, that only one avenue running north and south was laid out in a given distance to four tranverse streets. Moreover, most of these avenues were arranged so as to be of the least possible use. They start from nowhere in particular, for they were joined on to the old street system arbitrarily wherever they happened to come, and no attempt was made to bring the old plan into harmony with the new. The only serviceable through lines for traffic were those which already existed—the Bowery and its extension, Third Avenue, and Broadway joined to the old Bloomingdale Road. The result has been that the main flow of traffic has been congested into these streets. The avenues which are crossed by Broadway have never received anything like their proportionate development below the points of crossing. The lower parts of Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Avenues are dead ends, so to speak; they serve little purpose in relieving the stress of up and down traffic. To make them serviceable they need a feeder of sufficient magnitude at their lower ends, which could be had by enlarging Varick Street, in a somewhat more radical way than that recently suggested by the Municipal Art Society, viz., by cutting it through to meet Broadway at the City Hall at one end, to intersect Bleecker Street at the other end, making it of great width and extending the avenues to meet it. Broadway would then be relieved

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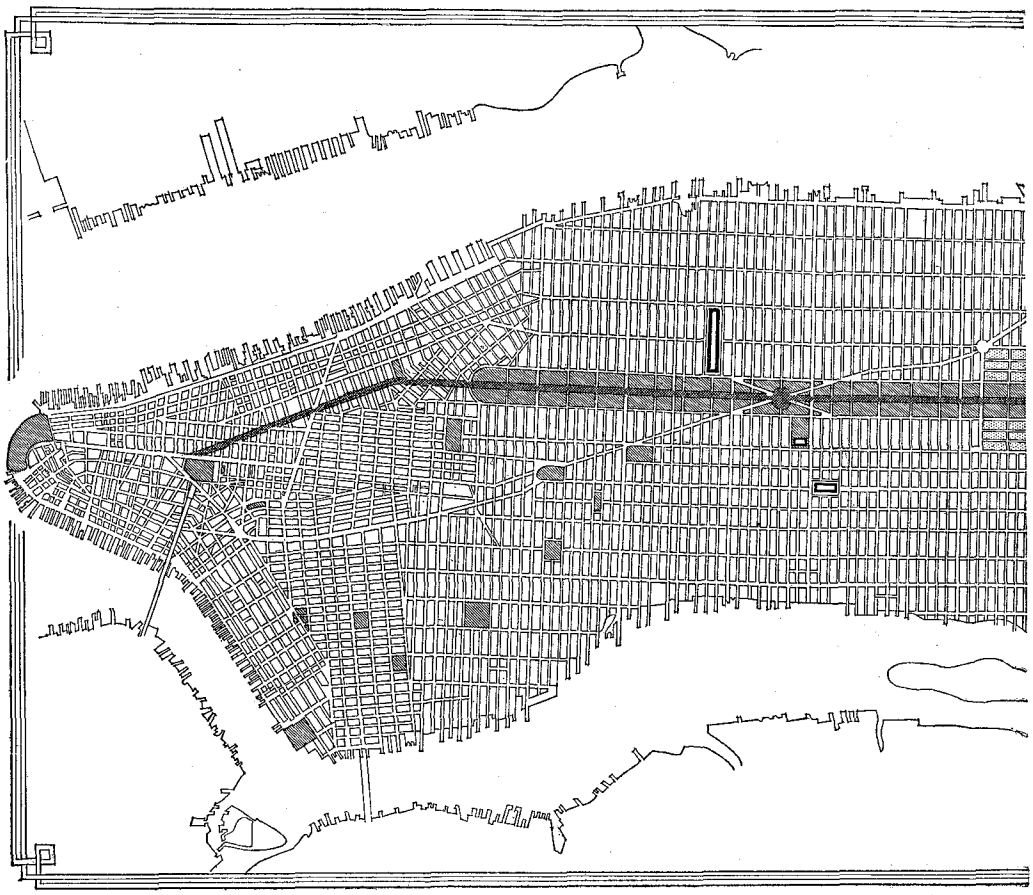

at its most congested point, and the whole lower west side would receive its proper development. If this change were made, even at the great cost it would now involve, the increased taxes based on the rise in value of the region benefitted would undoubtedly soon more than cover the interest on the sum expended.

The efforts which have heretofore been made to break the bond imposed on the city by the adoption of the unfortunate plan of 1807 have been so restricted or hampered by existing conditions, and have been carried out with so little method and continuity of purpose, that they have amounted to scarcely more than makeshifts. From time to time a square has been opened here, a park there, a street cut through in one place or widened in another, but these improvements have been entirely local in their effect, and have failed to change the general appearance of the city. Even the greatest of all these changes, the laying out of Central Park, was unfortunate, to say the least, for it serves to aggravate one of the worst features of the original plan, viz., the failure to provide a central artery of communication worthy of the coming city. If it was an error to provide four transverse streets in a given distance to one longitudinal one for a city in which the main flow of travel must always be up and down, what can be said for an improvement which practically closed the two central avenues, and placed the park on the natural axis of traffic? Perhaps it is not yet time for the full magnitude of this mistake to be generally understood. Central Park is still regarded by most New Yorkers with pride; and rightly so, for it is beautiful, and up to the present time has served its purpose well; but the time must soon come when the disadvantages of its location will be too apparent to be hid.

If one examines the present situation without prejudice, he must admit that the *raison d'être* for the park as it stands is becoming daily less and less apparent. In its laying out

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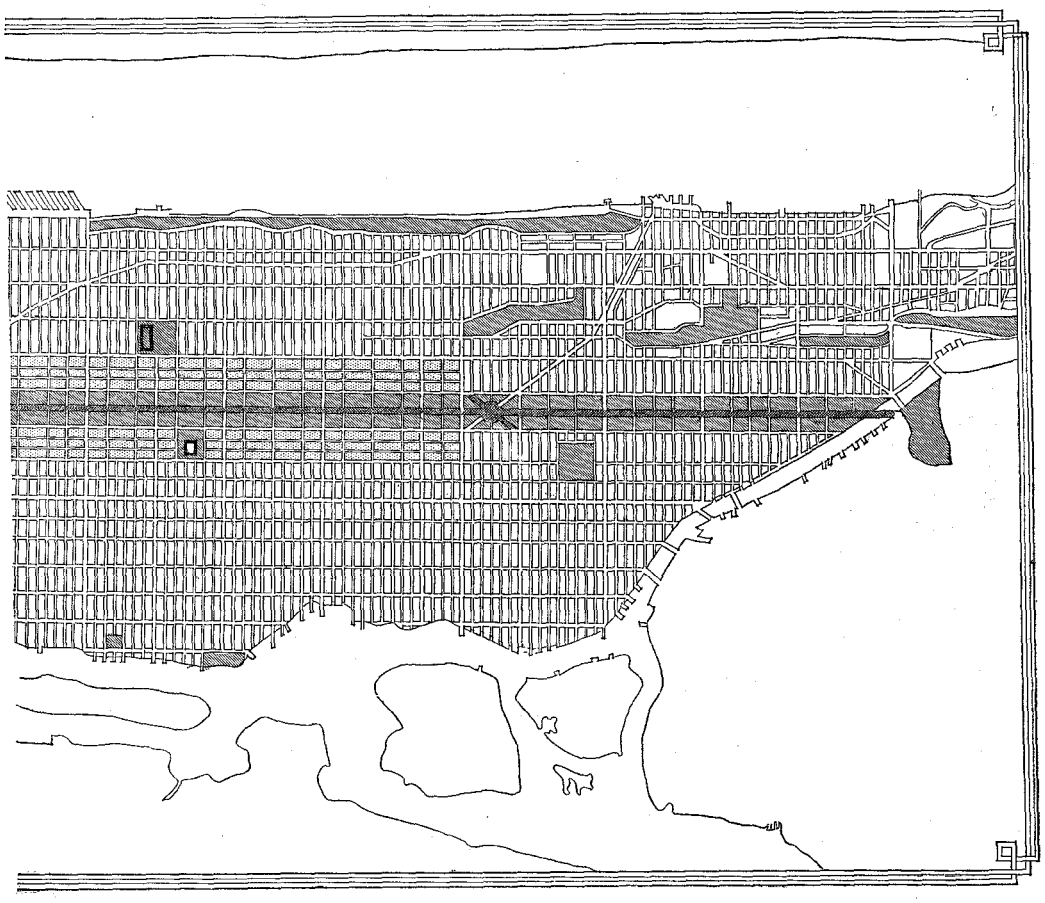

and treatment Central Park is essentially a suburban pleasure ground. Its scenery is naturalistic; its lakes, groves, and meadows are intended to represent a bit of beautiful rural landscape. Before tall buildings began to surround it, it fulfilled this function fairly well; the illusion was complete enough to be satisfying; but now to some extent the charm is lost by the intruding buildings, and in the future, when completely surrounded by them, it will be almost entirely lost. It will then cease to be a rural pleasure ground, and become simply the affectation of one, in the heart of a large city, where every requirement of common sense and good taste calls for a different kind of treatment. Ornamental grounds of this sort should not be so wide as to be inconvenient and serve as a barrier between the adjacent parts of the city as Central Park does. They should be laid out in a formal rather than a naturalistic way, for as they must be seen in connection with the buildings, there should be such a degree of harmony between the two that the one may play into the hands of the other. The grounds should form a beautiful foil or setting for the buildings, and the buildings serve to ornament the grounds. The purpose of such pleasure grounds should be to open up and enliven the appearance of the city, to bring sunlight, air, and verdure into the heart of the town; to afford agreeable promenades and drives; and by a judicious choice of location to distribute these benefits within the reach of the greatest possible number of people. Since Central Park was laid out conditions have changed; with the completion of the proposed lines of rapid transit, the real suburbs will become as accessible to the mass of the population of the future as the park has been in the past. What is needed now is, not a suburban central park, but agreeable ways to reach the suburban park system for which provision has fortunately been made. The reservoirs which occupy so much of the park area are no longer needed where they are.

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Formerly, when the entire water supply depended on the High Bridge Aqueduct, it was necessary to have a considerable storage capacity on the island; but now, when there can be any number of subterranean conduits, the reason for it has ceased to exist.

It is not pretended for a moment that the densely populated part of the city requires fewer breathing spaces than it now has; on the contrary it needs more, and a better distribution of them. The few open squares scattered about the town are utterly inadequate. As now arranged they serve rather to remind one of the general lack of verdure than to supply its want. The few trees which they possess are a poor substitute for the wooded avenues one finds in other great cities. There is a crying need here for long stretches of grass, avenues of trees, and gardens, so placed that they can be conveniently reached by all the people; and the shape of this island is such that if there were a parkway through its centre, this want might be fulfilled. New York ought to have such a parkway, which would serve both as a breathing place for the crowded city, and as a main artery of communication through it; an avenue like the Champs Elysées of Paris, Unter den Linden of Berlin, or the Ring Strasse of Vienna, but more ample than any of them; for here, of all places, owing to the shape of the island, there is the most need of such a thing. Fortunately this can be had now, if we want it, without either bankrupting the treasury or curtailing the habitable area of the town. To obtain the funds, it would only be necessary to sell off land which the city now owns, and apply the proceeds to the purchase of other land of at least equal extent. If those parts of the park lying between Fifth Avenue and the extension of Sixth Avenue on the east side and between Eighth Avenue and the extension of Seventh Avenue on the west side, were sold, and the proceeds applied to the purchase of all the land lying between Sixth and Seventh Avenues, from Christopher Street to the Harlem River, the city would then have a strip for a parkway a thousand feet wide and more than ten miles long, lying right on the central axis of the city, where it would do the most good to the greatest number of inhabitants (pp. 254-5). Here could be constructed a thoroughfare worthy of the metropolis of the new world. If opened up at the lower end by a suitable avenue of approach from the City Hall Park, such as already suggested by way of an enlarged Varick Street, and connected with the district beyond the Harlem River by the necessary bridges, it would solve the difficulties of through transit for the city for all time, become the finest, as it would be the most important, highway of the world, and at the same time give to the entire island the breathing space and beauty it now so sorely needs.

Some idea of the splendor of such a plan may be had when we realize that even if the central avenue or parkway had a clear roadway 160 feet wide, or four times the width of that of Fifth Avenue, there would still remain for gardens distributed on both sides of it a space about as wide as Madison Square is long. Now imagine this strip of verdure extended for ten miles through the heart of the town, shaded by trees, ornamented with shrubbery, fountains, statuary, arches, and every other suitable embellishment, and where could one find its equal? The finest avenues of the old world would pale in comparison. The Mall at Washington as it is proposed to rearrange it would not be as wide and only about one-fifth as long.

Such a programme of course could not be carried out at once without involving unnecessary expense and great inconvenience, but it might be done gradually. If improvements were stopped on the area to be acquired, the city could easily undertake the conversion of one or two blocks a year, at the same time selling off an equal area of its park lands. If this were done systematically, in the course of forty or fifty years the task would be accomplished without great disturbance of values, with little inconvenience, and at comparatively slight cost.

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